

August 31, 2011

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to thank you for providing me with an Equal Justice America Fellowship which enabled me to have an amazing summer internship working with the Special Education Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG). Without your generous support I would have been unable to work with the amazing attorney's at NYLAG providing legal services for children with disabilities and their families.

The attorneys and volunteers of the Special Education unit at NYLAG provide legal services to low income families with disabled children. While I come from a family of teachers, I have no educational background myself, and no personal education in special education or special education law, which is regulated under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). Working with Laura Davis, Phyllis Brochstein, and Joel Mandalbaum enabled me to learn the ins and outs of IDEA and the corresponding New York Education Laws that regulate how public and private schools educate and provide services for disabled students.

Through this internship I gained experience researching special education issues for a variety of cases involving families with children who have been parentally placed in private schools as a result of the failures of public school districts to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) as mandated by IDEA and case law from Impartial Hearing Officer decisions, State Review Officer decisions, New York State and Federal Courts. Additionally, I gained experience reviewing student medical, social, and academic evaluations, Individualized Education Programs (IEP's), and recommended placements for legal issues at various stages of the special education process. As the summer progressed I worked with Joel and Phyllis building cases for three different disabled children based on their academic and medical records for Impartial Hearing Requests which is the first of the process for gaining administrative review of school district placements and IEP's provided for disabled students.

One of the best experiences of the summer was attending a Resolution session (another step in the process when contesting the educational placement or services provided or suggested by a public school for a disabled student) with Laura Davis and the mother of a disabled student who is autistic. The Resolution session was requested by Laura in this case, unlike many other cases where we waive this procedural step because it rarely leads to a solution, however, here, the issue was with the number of additional afterschool, in home service hours this child was going to receive in the coming school year. The school had decided to remove his additional home service instruction, even though doctors and his parents had requested that it continue for the 2011-2012 school year. At the Resolution session, with our help, we were able to keep the services from getting cut completely, so that he will continue to receive the services 3 days a week in the families home. For me, it was not so much what we were able to gain for this child, but the mother's sincere gratitude for what we were able to help her gain for her son. She was so happy

that she was hugging both Laura and I, she thanked us repeatedly, and even cried. It was so rewarding to know that our work had provided so much happiness for this mother, and the services for her son that she knew is so important to his continued growth and education.

I have been committed to pursuing a career in public interest law since beginning my legal education and to providing help to those unjustly affected by social constructs and economic inequality. However, my work with NYLAG has only increased my dedication to providing legal services for low-income families and their children. I am extremely grateful to Equal Justice America for providing me a fellowship to pursue this opportunity. I have gained invaluable education in special education law, and an incredible experience.

Sincerely,

Morgan Marshall-Clark
New York Law School, Class of 2012