

August 31, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am a Columbia Law School student and will be starting my second year in the fall of this year. Between June 4 and August 3 of this year I have been working in public interest for Bedford-Stuyvesant Community Legal Services.

My work this summer has been very diverse. On my first day, I met my supervisor in housing court where I observed her advising a client and reaching a settlement with the opposing counsel. Within the first week I was assigned to my first client, on whose behalf I conducted legal research, communicated with opposing counsel, wrote a motion, and on whose behalf I argued a motion before a trial judge in housing court. Thanks to the Student Practice Order I was lucky enough to not only be a part of, but to be in charge of every step of my client's case.

Besides representing my first client, I have worked, on my own under the supervision of my supervisor and on some cases with my supervisor, with many other clients on housing issues. Some of the issues I worked on included Housing Part Petitions, which are petitions to compel a landlord to make necessary repairs; nonpayment cases; holdover cases; petitions for administrative review, and many other issues. In the process of helping tenants on these issues I have conducted legal research, drafted memoranda, motions, answers, bills of particulars, orders to show cause and letters to opposing counsel, government agencies and the clients themselves. I conducted client intake and interviews, participated in the housing hotline, and most recently participated in preparing witnesses for a trial.

In addition to housing cases, I have also worked on an immigration case that involved the Violence Against Women Act with my supervising attorney. I also worked on a disability case, for which I worked on a pre-hearing memorandum of law to obtain disability benefits for a client.

Another interesting project I worked on was an article on the landlord's duty to mitigate when a tenant breaks a lease. I worked on this article with the director of the housing litigation, and the article was published in the New York Law Journal on August 30.

By far the most rewarding aspect of this summer internship has been my interaction with the clients. Whether speaking to them only on the phone through the hotline, meeting them in the office, in court or in their home, when extra investigating was necessary, I have found that I was able to make a difference in their lives and to help them solve their problems. The individual stories of each tenant I met made all the cases I have worked on so much more interesting, and have only increased my desire to become a lawyer and to explore different legal issues.

Sincerely,

Olga F. Peshko
Columbia