

Dear Equal Justice America:

This summer, I worked at Advocacy, Incorporated in Austin, Texas in the Legal Services Unit, serving all of Texas. For ten weeks, I worked alongside five other clerks. Primarily, we researched Medicaid cases in addition to working on ongoing and separate research projects for Advocacy, Inc. senior attorneys.

Over the course of the summer, I had the opportunity to prepare for two Medicaid hearings, in which the clients were denied services by the state Medicaid office. The preparation, in both cases, was for the fair hearings that would take place later this summer. In one case, the child involved was kicked out of Medicaid after requesting a power wheelchair. In the other case, the child was denied nursing services, as Medicaid said the services were not necessary. Both children were developmentally disabled and almost completely reliant on others for day-to-day living activities. My job was to research the state standards for medical necessity in order to prove that the state did not follow these standards in denying services to the children involved. Unfortunately, neither hearing took place in my time at Advocacy, Inc., but I do hope that my work will play some small part in the children getting the services they need to function.

I also worked briefly on two other projects. The first project was a suit that went to settlement, concerning a company's liability in failing to provide video relay services for its deaf constituents as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. While researching the case, I had the opportunity to learn from an attorney how a telecommunications relay call actually worked in practice and why it would be so useful. The project that consumed the bulk of my time however, was a research project for a senior attorney involving involuntary commitment standards for the developmentally disabled in all 50 states. In anticipation of an upcoming lawsuit, the attorney wanted to know what were the statutes and procedures in the other 49 states, so as to provide the court with an alternative to the procedure used in Texas. As many of the procedures and statutes were difficult to find via Westlaw (or not present at all), the research involved either calling or emailing the sister offices in the other 49 states to get answers from other attorneys. I was able to compile notes and answers from many of the

states, while discussing the statutes weekly with the senior attorney. Talking with the attorneys from around the nation was one of the better parts of the summer experience, and in my opinion, really helped me see the big picture. That is, the calls helped me see that there is a network of attorneys and advocates nationwide, dedicating their talents and crafts to helping those in need.

Finally, one of the most memorable parts of my summer experience was participating in two mediations in the Central Texas region. I traveled with two advocates to a town east of Waco to attend a special education mediation for a young man who had been having trouble at school. At the school district attorney's request, I was not allowed to actually participate in the mediation. Advocacy, Inc., however, was able to generate an agreement, requiring the school to meet the young man's needs. Additionally, the mediator came outside to the lobby (where I was sitting while the mediation took place inside) regularly to talk about practicing and applying the law in mediations. The second mediation took place in San Antonio but was an employment discrimination case instead. Here, I did actually get to participate – or at least watch – as the attorneys from Advocacy, Inc. and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission teamed together to represent a man who had not been hired, presumably because he had diabetes. Over the course of nine hours, the attorneys were able to generate a settlement for the client. Here, again the mediator seemed in control, persistent and generous (free lunches are always nice).

In sum, I very much enjoyed my experience at Advocacy, Inc. While I feel I know too little to say I learned a lot, watching the senior attorneys, hearing from other attorneys from around the nation, and seeing the satisfied looks on the client's faces has convinced me that I want to dedicated what little talents I have to servicing those in need as well.

Thank you Equal Justice America for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

Richard Greene
University of Texas School of Law
Expected Graduation, May 2012