

August 31, 2014

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

RE: EJA Summer Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to tell you about my summer internship with Greater Boston Legal Services, which was supported by the Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship. I want to thank you and your organization for all the work you do to fund public interest scholarships like mine. The support you give us is invaluable and much needed for those of us who are committed to pursuing public interest careers.

My experience this summer was a great reaffirmation of my career goals. As a Housing Intern, my work was focused primarily on serving homeless families in Massachusetts as they navigated through the Emergency Assistance Program. This program provides shelter assistance and other aid to Massachusetts families in need. The majority of my work consisted of direct clients services, as well as researching regulations and administrative documentation, as well as writing memoranda and other legal documents in order to advocate for our clients as they worked with a number of governmental agencies. We worked to support our clients as they sought access to shelter, requested a change of location due to good cause, or as fought against incorrectly applied regulations.

Through this direct client contact, I was able to learn a lot about the regulations and how the agency's interpretations of such regulations affects the families for whom they are intended. I was able to utilize my Spanish skills by interviewing, interpreting and translating for our Spanish-speaking clients. For example, I conducted intake interviews and follow-up interviews in English and in Spanish. I also translate court documents for a number of our clients so that they could be given fair notice of their respective situations, and I was given the opportunity to sit in on administrative hearings in order to check that the interpretations provided by the agencies were fair and accurate. A great tool we used as we advocated was consultation with the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute and Mass Legal Services' online library database, which contained past agency decisions.

One of the cases I worked on the most extensively involved a young mother who had lost her home due to domestic violence. She had also recently experienced a theft, which resulted in the loss of all her identification papers and other documentation. We were able to assist her by finding out her story and helping her to replace her documents so that she and her daughter could prove to the agency that she was in the country with authorization

and that she qualified for EA shelter benefits, specifically due to losing her home due to domestic violence. We were successful in advocating for her and she was placed in a shelter with her daughter where she plans on saving enough money to rent her own apartment.

One thing that really struck me about legal services is the complexity of the cases we would see. Oftentimes, our clients presented not just with shelter issues, but with multiple areas in their life for which they need assistance. I was therefore able to catch a glimpse of other areas of law, such as family law, immigration law, elder law and health law. The clients we served often sought assistance in a number of these areas, and it was a wonderful experience to work in a firm which provided all of these services and with attorneys who were so knowledgeable about the areas in which they worked.

I therefore wish to express my gratitude to you and EJA for allowing me the opportunity to work at Greater Boston Legal Services. The training that I received and the experience I had working with MA homeless families was invaluable and something that cannot be learned in a classroom setting. Thank you for the work that you do.

Sincerely,  
Roxana Orteza  
Boston College