

To: Dan Ruben  
Executive Director at Equal Justice America.

I would have to start by saying that coming to Greater Boston Legal Services for my Summer Internship was the best decision I could have made. I worked in the Housing Unit and more specifically in the Shelter Unit. I helped homeless families to get a roof over their heads. The feeling after knowing they got placed in a shelter is something I would not trade for anything in the world.

I remember the first client I had when I came here. She had a 3 year old son, was 3 months pregnant and living in her car with her boyfriend. I could not eat or sleep thinking about ways for me to help this family get placed into shelter. To make things worse, their car got towed a couple of times and ultimately it broke beyond repair. They had to sell it as junk and get some money to pay for a motel room. She worked part-time at a Dunkin Donuts and she made almost no money at all. She was considered ineligible under the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) monthly income eligibility standard because she made around 30 dollars over the limit for a family of 3. It was a very difficult situation. After one week of hard work with my supervisor and the client, we finally got them placed. I felt like a little kid who needed to tell that story to everyone around me. We beat an unfair system and they had no other choice but to place them in shelter.

After my first case I felt more prepared for what was coming. My supervisors placed their trust in me and another fellow intern and they handed cases to us so we could work with them independently. Of course, we were allowed to ask questions and raise any issues we were not sure about. We were free to talk directly to our clients, schedule meetings with them and what was more important, negotiate with DHCD and get them placed.

I handled over 15 cases. The one I will remember the most was about a 23 year old pregnant woman with her 5 year old daughter. She had a history of Domestic Violence. Her mom was very abusive and, allegedly, wanted to take her daughter away from her. She also wanted our client to give her the little money she received because of a disability issue. Client had to stay with some friends because she could not stay with her mom any longer under those circumstances. One of the DHCD regulations is that to be eligible for shelter you cannot have

feasible alternative housing. DHCD spoke to her friends and they informed them that client could not stay with them any longer. The mother was the last one they called. She had previously told client that she did not want her at her house because client “did not follow her rules.” I also spoke to her mother and she told me the same thing. She did not want her daughter back.

Apparently client did not have alternative feasible housing and therefore she was eligible for shelter. When DHCD called client’s mother, she told them that client had her room ready for her to move in whenever she wanted. She also told them that she had no problem with her coming back. As a result, client was denied shelter. Her mother then sent her a text telling her that she said NO the whole time. Mother was lying, apparently so DCF would take her daughter away from her. I talked to the mother on the phone several times. She kept telling me that she told DHCD that her daughter could not stay with her. DHCD had a different story. After I confronted the mother asking her to speak the truth if she wanted to see her daughter placed, she became very volatile and finally accepted the fact that she was lying to us the whole time. We finally got client placed in shelter under the Domestic Violence rule. After 2 weeks of hard work, client is now living in a room near Boston with her family. Cases like this one made me want to come to work every day and help people who needs it the most.

Being able to speak Spanish was very helpful. I had many clients who did not know how to read and write in English. Being able to communicate with them and explain their options was something they always appreciated.

I have to finish by saying that I had 3 wonderful supervisors. Laura Massie, Linda Garcia and Ruth Bourquin. It is amazing how much I learned from them and if they would take me back next summer, I would definitely come back here and continue helping people as much as possible. I would have to give special thanks to Laura Massie. She introduced me to my first client. She started this whole thing for me and now I can’t think of any other thing I would like to do more.

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