

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This past summer I interned at Legal Services of NYC. The majority of my internship consisted of assisting low-income individuals file Chapter 7 bankruptcy. I was initially assigned five clients that had been placed on the waiting list and my job was to fill out the petition for the client, file it with the court, and prepare a trustee packet to send to the trustee with a copy of the petition and relevant financial documents.

Preparing and completing the petitions constituted calling the clients on a regular basis in order to get the necessary documents to complete the petition. Once the petition was complete, which varied depending on how quickly I received documents, I would email the supervisor so he could review the petition. He would send me an email with revisions and then the next step would be to call the client and set up a finalization meeting. The finalization meeting lasted approximately two hours and it entailed going over every single page of the petition with the client, assuring that everything was correct, before filing it. In my case, all my clients spoke Spanish so I also had to translate the petition and make sure they understood everything they were signing and felt comfortable with the petition. This was a bit challenging because while I am fluent in Spanish, my knowledge of bankruptcy terminology or legal terminology in general is not the best. However, the clients were very patient with me and were able to understand every document in the petition. In addition to reviewing the petition with the client, the finalization meeting also involved role-playing the trustee meeting. I would ask general questions that the trustee might ask them in order to assuage their fears and help them feel a little less anxious about the trustee meetings. For many, the trustee meeting was their biggest source of anxiety since they would be doing that alone so it was really rewarding seeing how much calmer they got once we finished the meeting. I really enjoyed every aspect of filing these petitions because I

really built relationships with these clients, to the point where we recognized each other's voices immediately. I interacted with them 2-3 times a week and became very invested in their cases. Also, the appreciation they expressed after their cases were filed was indescribable. They were so grateful for all the work I had done and for helping them start over again.

Another part of the bankruptcy office in which I assisted was the workshops. Before a client is put on the waitlist or accepted immediately, they attend a workshop, where the supervisor provides him or her with information regarding Chapter 7 bankruptcy and then he or she is screened by a volunteer. I assisted with 4 of these workshops and took two additional cases through the workshop.

In regards to my non-bankruptcy work, the majority of that work consisted of helping with a summary judgment motion. The language access coordinator at the office was preparing a motion and a few of the interns assisted in going to meetings and collecting and copying documents. I also got to do some legal research and write a memo on Sheriff Arpaio's current lawsuit discussing whether depriving language access or interpretive services constitutes national origin discrimination under Title VI. This was extremely interesting to me because I'm a native Spanish speaker and have seen multiple family members be deprived interpretation services.

I was very pleased with my fellowship experience. I was able to work with real-life individuals facing severe problems and see how I was making a real impact in their lives as well as work on more abstract issues through my language access projects. Both were extremely rewarding and helpful to me as I continue to pursue my career.

Sincerely,

/s/

Stephanie Grajales
Columbia Law School, Class of 2014