

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
1350 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My name is Travis Fosbenner and I am a 2017 recipient of an Equal Justice America Law Student Fellowship. This financial award helped fund my summer internship with Philadelphia VIP, a non-profit organization that recruits, trains, and supports volunteer attorneys who provide free legal services to low-income clients. With the internship nearing its end, I wanted to send you a summary of how my experience with Philly VIP has gone, as well as a brief message of gratitude for supporting me during this time.

I began interning with Philadelphia VIP in late May 2018. After participating in a detailed orientation program during the first week at VIP, I started working on cases sitting in my assignments folder. My role was straightforward, but not necessarily easy. I essentially acted as the matchmaker between low-income clients and volunteer attorneys, following a detailed procedure to accomplish this task. The first step—and what I spent most of my time on—was communicating with clients to ensure that our organization had all of the information and documents we needed to place the client with a volunteer. This undertaking, while occasionally tedious and frustrating, was quite rewarding. Not only did it teach me more about the vast information required to perform legal work; speaking with clients provided me with the opportunity to learn about the difficult situations many low-income people experience regularly.

The legal issues of my clients were varied and unique. Looking through my case list now, I see that I've worked with clients who have legal issues including: landlord/tenant, probate, custody, divorce, collections, wills, auto accident, domestic, abuse, and fraudulent deed. This variety of issues provided me with the opportunity to learn and experience all kinds of law practice. To speak of my clients as different legal categories does them an injustice though. What mattered most to me was not their legal problem; it was the story that came with it.

The stories I heard from my clients demonstrated to me that low-income people are at a significant disadvantage in our legal system; not simply because they cannot afford legal assistance, but because they've often got so many other issues to deal with besides legal problems and often do not have the time to focus on solving their legal problems. Many of my clients worked multiple jobs, took care of many children, lived in low-quality housing, and experienced toxic relationships regularly. The additional burden of legal problems made their already stressful lives that much more difficult.

Once I completed my informational and document intake of each client, the next step of my job consisted of finding volunteer attorneys to take on these cases for free. This involved emailing lawyers listed in our organization's volunteer database. Being able to interact with practicing attorneys who continue to dedicate time to serve pro bono showed me that every lawyer out there—not just those in the public interest sector—has the ability to help out their

community in an actionable, personal way. As someone who is not set on a defined legal career path yet, this takeaway was a good one.

While the combination of listening to difficult stories from clients and pitching pro bono cases to attorneys was often mentally taxing, the supportive professional community at Philly VIP provided me not only with practical job training, but also personal advice on how to work in the public service sector without burning out. Though I do not yet know if I want to pursue a career in public service, this experience demonstrated to me that public interest attorneys have an amazing opportunity to live out professionally fulfilling careers while also maintaining a strong work-life balance. I am grateful for the financial support I received through Equal Justice America. Thank you for assisting me in funding my summer with Philadelphia VIP; it was definitely a career-changing experience.

Best,

Travis Fosbenner
Temple Law
Class of 2020



Philadelphia VIP

1500 Walnut Street
Suite 400
Philadelphia, PA 19102
215.523.9550 T
215.564.0845 F
www.phillyvip.org

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August 29, 2017

Dan Ruben, Esquire
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building 11 - Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

RE: EJA Fellowship Recipient Travis Fosbenner

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I was fortunate to have the opportunity to supervise fellowship recipient Travis Fosbenner at Philadelphia VIP this summer. On behalf of Philadelphia VIP, I thank Equal Justice America for supporting Travis's work with us. He was an asset to our team.

Philadelphia VIP is a non-profit legal services agency that provides free civil legal services to low-income Philadelphians by referring them to private attorneys who handle our cases on a *pro bono* basis. VIP receives referrals from other legal services agencies and is generally the "last resort" for clients seeking free legal assistance.

Travis's work focused on working with clients and assessing their cases for referral to pro bono counsel. Philadelphia VIP handles almost all areas of civil law from adoption to zoning. The bulk of Travis's cases paralleled the areas where we receive the most requests for assistance: family law – custody, divorce, and support -- and homeownership, where the goal is helping clients with a legal right to their properties obtain record ownership.

As an intern, Travis had a significant amount of responsibility, and he handled his work professionally. Under my supervision, Travis evaluated new cases for possible referral to VIP volunteer attorneys. In evaluating the cases, Travis had to assess the cases' legal merits and the clients' eligibility for free

Since 1981, the hub of pro bono legal services in Philadelphia



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Sophie Bryan

legal services. This process involved considerable client interviewing and follow up, presenting some of his more complex cases to the legal team during our weekly case reviews, and pitching his cases to volunteers and make the referrals. Travis learned quickly and was able to process all of his cases timely.

Travis also wrote a legal memo on an issue germane to our work – leases with options to purchase. His writing and analytical skills were excellent, and we will share the memo with our volunteers.

Travis's hard work had a direct impact on ensuring our clients' access to justice. Thank you again for funding Travis's internship with Philadelphia VIP.

Sincerely,

Roxane Crowley
Supervising Attorney

Via email only: Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org