

To: Dan Ruben, Executive Director at Equal Justice America

This summer I worked as a law student intern at the Legal Assistance Foundation in Chicago. The opportunity was made possible thanks to public interest funding and an extra grant from your organization, and it was a wonderful opportunity at that.

Alongside seasoned staff attorneys, I did a lot of meaningful work this summer. I was assigned to LAF's Children & Family Group, where I worked on petitions for dissolution of marriage, custody judgments, and other proceedings on behalf of women who suffered emotional or physical abuse at the hands of their spouse. These women felt helpless, lost, torn, and we helped with all of that.

To complete motions and other documents, I had to speak to clients on the phone or in person to learn more about their lives and current living and financial situations. A lot of our clients held back details about the abuse they suffered or apologized for needing our help, but I learned quickly how to assuage those feelings and get them to disclose all necessary information. Clients generally had trouble acquiring information about their spouse's financial accounts or debts the parties incurred during the marriage, so it was nice to be able to help with that and take the burden off them. I enjoyed having that much contact with clients and being able to help them firsthand, and I know that such an opportunity is rare.

When I was not working on clients' petitions or sending out subpoenas for information, I was sitting with clients in our meeting rooms, going over the documents to make sure they approved, or on the phone with them and other agencies to see what else we could do to help them transition to their new lives as single, independent individuals. A lot of our clients were on food stamps, or homeless, or living with relatives that could only house them for a few weeks or months. Some clients had bills they could not afford to pay, or homes that were about to be foreclosed upon, and so we transferred those clients to LAF's Consumer Group or another agency that we thought could help. The attorneys at LAF go above and beyond what is asked of them, and I tried to do the same whenever I could. The most important thing was letting our clients know that they were not alone, and I certainly did that whenever I could.

I speak Spanish fluently, so I was often assigned to help with Spanish-speaking clients. I translated legal documents for them, sent them case update letters in their native tongue, and answered questions they had to make sure they understood everything about their case and how it would proceed in court. LAF has interpreters on staff that could have easily done what I did, but they are greatly outnumbered by the amount of clients needing their help, and I enjoyed being able to step in and ease their caseload.

The client I most enjoyed working with was a Spanish-speaking 69 year-old woman who had been married to her abusive husband for over 30 years. At his hands, she suffered broken bones, including a broken jaw and arm, intense humiliation, and much more. We helped finalize her divorce, get her temporary and later permanent maintenance, and we also helped save her home. Whenever I spoke to her on the phone, she always told me to focus on the positive in life. She loved to tell me stories about how she had moved on since she had moved out of the parties' marital home, including working a new job and spending more time with her children, and how blessed she felt that LAF was able to help her.

Seeing our petitions and motions entered into court made me feel like I truly made a difference, but it was our clients' happiness that will stay with me forever. One client in particular thanked me for my help, and then added, "Without LAF, I would have never felt free again." So that's how I choose to view my experience this summer: as having helped clients start living again, on their own and free of their past. The work was trying at times, definitely, but it was immensely humbling and enriching.

I gained a lot more than just legal experience through my work this summer, and I understand now how important it is to have organizations like LAF helping people who cannot afford legal representation elsewhere, or who do not know where to go when it comes to changing the situation they are in and improving their lives for the better. I would gladly work at LAF again.

Tammy Tabush
University of Chicago

August 25, 2015

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
c/o Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

Re: Tammy Tabush\2015 Summer Intern

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to you to give you my thoughts and opinions regarding Ms. Tabush. She interned at our agency this summer in our Children and Family Practice Group. In particular, she worked with me and three other attorneys, all of whom handle domestic violence, custody, and divorce cases on behalf of low-income clients who are otherwise unable to afford legal representation.

Tammy has been a true asset to our group. Her work over the summer consisted of drafting numerous pleadings, legal research, and meeting with clients to review pleadings. During this time, she was always enthusiastic about any assignment and efficiently completed her work in a timely fashion. She was always professional and courteous when speaking with staff and clients. Her bilingual talents were also greatly appreciated.

Tammy assisted the attorneys in drafting numerous pleadings. She drafted initial divorce petitions, counter-petitions, judgments, and marital settlement agreements. In addition, she assisted with discovery issues, such as preparing subpoenas and drafting interrogatories and requests to produce. As part of this work, she also met with clients or spoke with clients by phone to review pleadings and other documents.

In addition, she handled research assignments concerning topics including service by publication and the impact of reconciliation in dividing property in a divorce. In a case involving domestic violence, she researched the issue of how and when federal authorities can seize a citizen's passport. She also researched for me the issue of coverture language in a case involving division of a pension and is currently drafting a memorandum regarding this research. Overall, her research work was concise and provided excellent guidance on the specific legal issues.

She attended our weekly meetings to discuss new cases and observed divorce proceeding and our Juvenile Court Expungement help desk.

In sum, she was a wonderful asset for our agency and our group this summer. We have all enjoyed working with her and we will miss her excellent help. Please feel free to contact me if you need further information. I have listed my contact information below.

Sincerely,



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