

August 13, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would first like to take this opportunity to thank you for providing me with such a wonderful Fellowship experience. Without Equal Justice America, I would not have received such great legal training or the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of so many clients in need of legal assistance. I am truly inspired by the work of Lakeshore Legal Aid.

Although I assisted numerous clients throughout the summer in many different areas of law, clients affected by mental illnesses deeply touched me because of my past experiences with my mother's mental illness. As one example, I would like to describe my experience assisting a client facing termination of parental rights for her four children after they had been removed during an episode of postpartum depression.

I first completed a one and a half hour phone intake with this client to allow her to explain the events that lead to the removal. She also explained the four current placements of the each child, which resulted from each child being born of four different fathers. The children have resided in these placements for 15 out of the last 22 months, which resulted in DHS seeking to petition to terminate her rights to each of the four children. This hearing would take place in a little over two weeks.

I then met with this client to conduct an in-person intake, where the client explained the measures that she had been taking since the children's removal to prove to the court that the children should be reunited with her. The client succeeded in finding stable housing, taking her prescribed medication, attending counseling, and obtaining a psychological evaluation. Although the client had made significant progress, she had not been able to find gainful employment, one of the goals for reunification.

Because neither my supervising attorney nor the staff attorney in the office had conducted a hearing of this type, I did not conduct the hearing myself, but I did attend the hearing. The attorney referee ordered that DHS would not be permitted to file a petition for termination at this time, but ordered that the children remain in their current placements with parenting time for our client. Our client has continued to see her children during her scheduled parenting time, and has been continuing to work on her reunification goals so that her children can one day reside with her again.

Representing this client gave her an extra opportunity to continue working toward reunification before termination proceedings began. This client has struggled for so long working towards her goals for reunification, and I believe our representation of her brought this to the court's attention. Working with this client also allowed me to use my past knowledge and experience with mental illness to encourage her to keep working toward reunification with her

children. I believe that I was able to give this client hope for the possibility of becoming a mother to her children again despite her mental illness.

A second client that impacted my Fellowship experience this summer was a client I met during outreach at a local free health clinic. The client and her husband were interested in making wills and powers of attorney because the wife was diagnosed with leukemia and only given a few months to live. I completed the intake with this client as I would any other client, but halfway through the intake the wife began to cry. I assumed that the client was upset because of the sensitive topic of our meeting, but after I spent some time consoling the wife she turned to me and said, "I'm sorry that I'm crying, it just makes me sad that a stranger treats me nicer than everyone in my family other than my husband."

I worked with the husband and wife multiple times throughout the summer, ensuring that these important documents were completed quickly. At each appointment the wife laughed, maintained a positive outlook, and thanked me for treating her with kindness and respect. This client taught me that sometimes making a difference in a client's life is much smaller than winning a large case, sometimes as small as taking the time to treat a client with genuine kindness.

The money that Equal Justice America provided me with gave me an experience that will shape the way that I practice law for many years to come. As the only full-time intern in an office of only two attorneys, I gained firsthand knowledge of the amount of work and dedication that legal aid attorneys put into assisting the public. Knowing the importance of providing all individuals with access to justice has changed the way that I will approach public interest work in the future. I am very grateful for this opportunity at Lakeshore Legal Aid.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tori Edgar', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tori Edgar
Michigan State University College of Law
J.D. Candidate May 2014



St. Clair County Office

803 10th Avenue, Ste. C
Port Huron, MI 48060

Lakeshore Legal Aid

Counsel & Advocacy Law Line

Toll Free: (888) 783-8190

13 August 2013

Ms. Katie Tomain
EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA
13540 East Boundary Road
Building II, Ste. 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

Via Electronic Mail only to:
Katie@equaljusticeamerica.org

**RE: Ms. Victoria (Tori) Edgar
Michigan State University College of Law
EJA Intern Final Report**

Dear Ms. Tomain:

I am writing to thank Equal Justice America for providing fellowship funding to enable Ms. Victoria (Tori) Edgar to complete an internship with our office this summer. Lakeshore Legal Aid is a non-profit §501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing free civil legal services for individuals living at or below poverty level.

Ms. Edgar worked for our office from 05/06/2013 through 08/13/2013. During this time, she completed 506.9 hours of work and provided legal assistance to clients in 94 cases. Her work included, but was not limited to:

- Initial client interviews
- Drafting pleadings for divorces with and without minor children
- Preparing and filing applications for fee waivers, new civil lawsuits, motions and orders
- Preparing service packets and Proofs of Service
- Negotiating and drafting judgments of divorce
- Researching and drafting post-judgment change of custody motions
- Advising clients about, drafting and executing Wills
- Advising clients about, drafting and executing Health Care Durable Powers of Attorney and Financial Durable Powers of Attorney
- Advising clients about, drafting and executing deeds for real property
- General legal research on various topics

Because justice for some is no justice at all

Counsel & Advocacy Law Line
Toll Free: (888) 783-8190

Additionally, Ms. Edgar was able to conduct a divorce pre-trial and three divorce *pro confesso* hearings herself, under the direct supervision of a licensed attorney, pursuant to Michigan Court Rule 8.120. She has received nothing but positive reviews from clients, court staff and her colleagues.

Ms. Edgar is very professional, dedicated and enthusiastic. Her written work is well-composed, accurate and thorough. Her courtroom demeanor and level of confidence is as professional as that of a seasoned attorney. It was a pleasure and an honor to work with her this summer.

Thank you again for awarding her a fellowship this summer. If you require more information regarding her internship with our office, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,



Tracie Dominique Boyd,
Supervising Attorney
(810) 985-5107, ext. 29

Because justice for some is no justice at all
