

August 8, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II - Suite 204
13540 E. Boundary Road
Midlothian, V.A. 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My experience this summer at the Brooklyn Bar Association Volunteer Lawyers Project was extremely rewarding. After my first year of law school, I was looking for a summer internship that would give me the opportunity to do substantive legal work and assume early responsibility. The VLP certainly lived up to these expectations. At the VLP, I tackled various civil legal issues in the areas of family, consumer, and elder law. At the beginning of the internship, the supervisor of the program thoroughly trained me and the other interns, after which we were then thrown into the work experience. I had my own client workload, and I assisted my clients in filing for divorce, child support, and 17A guardianship. I also explained to callers the services offered by the Volunteer Lawyers Project and provided referrals to the callers that we could not help.

In addition, the VLP hosts a consumer debt clinic once a week, where individuals being sued by credit card or loan companies can come in for legal advice and can also receive legal representation on their court dates through the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day program. I attended the clinic every Thursday, and this was one of the most enjoyable projects I worked on throughout the summer. It provided a chance for me to demonstrate dedication to client service, teamwork, and legal judgment. The clinic's attendees were completely unaware of their rights and the steps they needed to take after being sued. Many were also very intimidated, and feared being put in jail when they went to court. It was up to me to take charge of the situation, dispel their fears, and review their paperwork in order to decide what steps needed to be taken to best help the visitor. That involved filing answers to summons and complaints, preparing responses to interrogatories, preparing orders to show cause to vacate a judgment after a visitor's paycheck had been garnished, and preparing oppositions to motions for summary judgment. For example, one woman came in with her mother, who had been sued by a credit card company after having been influenced to enter into a payment plan with the company. This revealed how many senior citizens' vulnerabilities are played upon by credit card companies, and the older woman was completely unaware of the ramifications of the agreement. In her case, we prepared an order to

show cause so as to vacate the judgment on the basis that she had exempt income (Social Security and SSI) and that the amount being sued for was incorrect.

I also spent every Tuesday morning in the Kings County Civil Court representing clients through the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program. I spoke with opposing counsel to attempt to reach agreeable settlements for my clients, and when such agreements could not be made, I went in front of the judge with my client to resolve the matter. What I enjoyed most about working with the consumer debt clinic and the Volunteer Lawyer for the Day Program is that because of the ratio of clients to lawyers, there was a real need for me to provide supervised legal advice and to exercise my own legal judgment on the situation before consulting my supervisor. After the extensive training we had undergone, my supervisor frequently challenged us and expected us to act independently in the best interests of our clients.

I genuinely enjoyed working with all my clients, and I developed a special bond with them all, particularly because each client deserves to be treated as if her situation is different, not as though she is one of a group of several others with the same circumstances. One client I enjoyed working with was Ms. [James], whom I assisted in petitioning for the guardianship of her daughter [Jenny], who had been diagnosed as mentally retarded and developmentally disabled. I met with her on several occasions to prepare the paperwork, after which I then went to the Kings' County Surrogates Court to file the paperwork on her behalf and get a court date for her to go in front of the judge. Guardianship cases were especially enjoyable, and I enjoyed working with Ms. Stuckey because I admired her strength and her dedication to ensuring that her daughter was well-provided for when she reached the age of majority.

Without a doubt, my experience at the VLP not only allowed me to learn more about the law and to further hone my legal mind, but also provided a great community of legal minds that I could interact with and learn from. The interns that I worked with were also equally passionate about what we did, and I enjoyed working along with them to serve our clients. The VLP is a rather small office, and we all became a small family over the summer. It was not uncommon for someone to burst into song or bring in treats for the office, and we all relied on each other and supported each other in all our ventures. I also appreciated that my supervisor and the other staff attorneys always asked the opinions of the interns when they had a pressing legal issue, making us truly feel part of the team. I had an extremely satisfying summer, and I am very happy that Equal Justice America contributed to my summer experience.

Sincerely,



Trudy McLeary