

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

RE: Equal Justice America Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My summer with Alaska Legal Services Corporation (ALSC) was an incredible learning experience. My fellowship focused on rural legal issues including access to justice for low-income Alaskans. Many of the clients we served at ALSC lived in remote villages only accessible by plane or boat. This created many challenges for ALSC in providing quality advocacy, but also opportunities to solve problems creatively and collaboratively.

One of the main focuses of my fellowship was drafting wills for tribal members. I learned about a lot of property issues specific to Alaska Natives, including fractionalization of native allotments and inheritance of native corporation stock. Interacting with clients and ensuring that they have a plan for end-of-life was so rewarding. We were able to deposit wills with the local courthouses for our clients at no cost, which ensured that the will would be stored in a safe place and the client did not face any hardship in traveling to the courthouse (since many clients lived off the road system.)

I also spent a lot of time researching administrative case law. Alaska has a high rate of Medicare and Social Security denials, leaving many low-income people without adequate access to critically needed healthcare such as home health services. Additionally, the costs of healthcare are often higher in Alaska because it is such a rural state, so paying out of pocket is a huge burden and usually not an option. ALSC took on a lot of appeals of these denials, and oftentimes we were able to negotiate a settlement with the Attorney General's office. Getting a client access to the healthcare services they needed was one of the most satisfying parts of working with ALSC.

I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with ALSC and look forward to continuing to be an advocate for social justice.

Best,

/s/

Emily Obermiller
University of Washington School of Law
JD Candidate, 2018