

August 24, 2017

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben,

Receiving the Equal Justice America Fellowship for my summer of 2017 law clerk position at the Family Law Project in Ann Arbor, Michigan allowed me to serve low income domestic violence victims who desperately need legal assistance for themselves and their children. My bachelor's degree in Social Work and past experience as a Domestic Violence Shelter caseworker and legal assistant at the Domestic Violence Unit at the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office helped me to address clients' legal needs as well as connect them to local services so they could be as successful as possible.

There was a considerable amount of crisis in the work that we did at the Family Law Project. I often was the key point of contact for clients during their moments of crisis and I also completed many intake interviews for clients as they were just leaving or beginning to leave their abuser. I used my experience as a caseworker and training as a social worker to act as a counselor as well as a legal advocate for these women. Through legal action, we were able to make the clients' dream of independence a reality. Their fears and crises could all be addressed through a variety of legal actions I was able to help my supervising attorney with. These included emergency actions to prevent their abusers from taking their children out of state or selling assets, emergency child and spousal support orders, orders to get their abusers out of their homes, personal protection orders and equitable divorces.

Through legal assistance, these survivors of domestic violence were able to leverage power over their abusers, who have often made them feel ignorant, hopeless, powerless and frightened. What couldn't be fixed by legal remedy or what couldn't be fixed soon enough to meet the clients' family's immediate needs, I referred many clients to local services that could meet the clients' crises for free or low cost. I helped the Family Law Project to incorporate a resource list into their serving of clients so that the many other needs that low income domestic violence survivors have could be met that legal assistance can't help with. I hope that the Family Law Project will continue to utilize these resources in the future to provide comprehensive assistance to their clients.

The work that Family Law Project is essential to ensure that domestic violence victims in Washtenaw County are able to leave their abusers safely and securely. Often, our clients were granted sole custody of their children, personal protection orders and an equitable amount of assets gained in their marriage. I am very grateful for the opportunity to help these strong women, learn how to deal with domestic violence victims in a legal setting and utilize my skills from previous experiences to help clients compassionately and holistically. I had never worked in a legal setting before that had specific clients, let alone clients in such crisis, so this experience was invaluable to me as a future lawyer.

During my work as a law clerk, I found myself able to relate to these women's experiences and the experiences of their children as I experienced my mother divorcing from an abuser as a young age and the subsequent poverty we experienced due to that decision to keep us safe. I wish that the Family Law Project was around to help my own mother during our crisis, but was glad to help the agency spare other women from the same struggles through adequate and free legal assistance.

By receiving the Equal Justice America Fellowship, I was able to work full time during the summer and follow cases of clients from when they first left their abusers to receiving

personal protection orders, receiving temporary custody and filing for divorce. I even was able to help with the filing of special crime victim visas for a couple of our Spanish-speaking non-citizen domestic violence survivors which also allowed me to utilize my language skills. It was inspiring to me to see the strength of these women who left their abusers to ensure the safety and security of themselves and their children. Through tears, stress and hard work, these women were able to create a new life for themselves with the help of free legal aid. Their stories will continue to inspire me as I work towards my career in the public interest and my future goals to work as a lawyer on behalf of victims of crime.

Sincerely,

Sage Casselman
Wayne State Law School
Class of 2019



August 15, 2017

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

Re: Summer Law Clerk Sage Casselman

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to report back on Sage Casselman's Summer Clerkship with the Family Law Project of Legal Services of South Central Michigan, for which she was given a grant from Equal Justice America. Ms. Casselman, like many of our Summer Law Clerks, helped our office in many different ways. We rely heavily on our students to keep our office operating smoothly.

We currently have three (3) attorneys on our staff, and very little support/clerical staff, so law students are an integral part of our attorneys managing their large, and often complex, caseloads. Ms. Casselman's duties ranged from meeting with and interviewing clients, drafting a wide range of legal documents (pleadings, orders, briefs, legal memoranda, motions, discovery responses, letters, etc.), conducting legal research and investigations, dispensing legal advice and assisting in attorneys in court. Ms. Casselman specifically worked with several high needs clients in divorce cases and was able to connect them with a multitude of supportive services to ameliorate unpaid child support, work through dense financial discovery responses and draft a detailed request for immigration relief.

Should you have any further questions about this Clerkship or Sage Casselman, please do not hesitate to contact our office. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Emily Jackson Miller
Staff Attorney

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