

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This past summer of 2007 I interned at the Legal Service of the Hudson Valley (LSHV). This non-profit organization provides a variety of legal service to those who need legal help, but cannot afford to hire an attorney. LSHV deals with numerous issues including landlord-tenant, HIV, SSI, unemployment, education, family law, domestic violence, and all other matters which are not considered to be criminal and thus are not dealt with by Legal Aid services.

I worked directly under an attorney who deals with landlord-tenant matters. Those include, but are not limited to: evictions, non-payment, warranty of habitability, succession rights, etc. It should be noted that due to high volume of landlord-tenant cases, LSHV has to limit their services to clients who fall under the Emergency Tenant Protection Act (ETPA). ETPA is similar to rent control housing acts that are followed in the New York City. A lot of the times the landlord institutes proceedings in hopes of evicting the tenant so that he can subsequently re-lease the residence and charge market value for it, as opposed to the much lower rent controlled rent. LSHV's goal is to preserve the rent-controlled housing in an area which has been designated one of the five most expensive places to rent/buy in America.

My first day at the internship I was asked to write an affidavit in the matter of a woman who was behind on her rent payments. She is a special

education teacher, has two children and her husband was recently incarcerated. Because of the high costs of her husband's trial she could not pay two months rent and an eviction proceeding was commenced against her. This matter went to trial, but the judge agreed to a conference and we came to an agreement, where due dates were set and a stay of eviction pending payment was ordered by the judge.

Every case I was involved in this summer can be classified as success. Even the clients who eventually did get evicted were able to get an extension, which allowed them to find alternative housing without a need to remove all their belongings and temporarily move to a shelter. One of our clients did want to move out as soon as possible, but she needed more time than the requisite 72 hours to find a new place. She has three children, one of whom is severely autistic, and moving to a shelter, no matter how temporarily would have been devastating to a child with such an illness. Autistic children require a rigid schedule, deviation from which can set them into a panic. One move is already difficult for them, but a move to a shelter and then another move could have had irreparable consequences. Therefore by giving her more time to move out, she only had to move once thus making it easier on her and her children.

Every bit of help is invaluable to an organization like LSHV. Constantly understaffed and overloaded with cases they welcome anyone who can ease the burden even if ever so slightly. Even though it would take my supervisor a couple of hours to write a brief that would take me two days, it still saved her those two hours and allowed her to do other work. I loved every minute of my internship because I got real experience from day one. Everything I did was

used in real cases and everything I wrote was filed with the courts. I participated in every aspect of LSHV's work and was even single-handedly in charge of three cases. I interviewed and corresponded with clients, wrote all the motions, briefs and other documents, did research and corresponded with the opposing counsel.

This internship thoroughly prepared me for my future work as an attorney, and solidified my interest in becoming a prosecutor. The Fellowship stipend made it possible for me to intern at LSHV because I was able to cover my travel and food expenses, as well as some of the other bills. I would not be able to do what I did this summer without it.

Sincerely,

Yelena Kozlova

Fordham Law School