

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This past summer, I had the pleasure of working at LAF, a non-profit legal aid organization that provides civil legal services to people living in the Chicagoland area whose income is below the poverty line. I was assigned to the Housing Practice Group where I worked on landlord-tenant cases, defending tenants facing eviction or potentially having their rent subsidies terminated by one of the housing authorities in Cook County. Working on these cases has been one of the most challenging but rewarding experiences that I have had in my life. I have had the privilege of sharing in many client's stories and being part in making a positive difference in their lives in meaningful ways.

One of my most impactful moments from my summer at LAF was when I had the opportunity to represent one of our clients at a Chicago Housing Authority Informal Hearing. The client was facing termination of her Housing Choice Voucher for allegedly causing damage to an apartment she and her children used to live in. I met with the client soon after I started at LAF to hear her story. She told me about the horrible conditions in her apartment, which included mold and mice, and how her landlord refused to fix anything. The conditions in her former apartment were so bad that her daughter had to stay elsewhere with the client's mother. She also denied causing any of the damage to her apartment.

After investigating and discussing the case with the rest of the Housing Practice Group, we decided to represent her at the CHA Informal Hearing. At informal hearings, the voucher holder can be represented by a lawyer or another representative, meaning that I as a first-year law student, even though I did not have my temporary 711 Illinois Supreme Court license, was able to represent the client during her hearing. My supervisor, Jess, was fantastic at helping me prepare for the hearing, spending many hours and even coming into work over the weekend to make sure that I was ready. At the hearing, I conducted an opening statement, a direct examination, two cross examinations of the CHA representative and of the landlord, and a closing statement. Several weeks later, we received a letter in the mail informing us that our client's voucher was reinstated. It was a great victory, and it would not have been possible without the help and support of the attorneys in LAF's Housing Practice Group.

This is just one of many stories from this past summer that have left an indelible mark on my life and my future career as a public interest attorney. Working at LAF has confirmed my want to work in legal aid, being of service to others by making some sort of difference in the community around me. This past summer would not have been possible without the support of EJA. Thank you so much for helping me have the impact that I did in the Chicago area this past summer.

Sincerely,

Colin Nardone
University of Illinois College of Law, Class of 2020



Equal justice starts here.

Jessica Kalmewicki, Supervisory Attorney – Housing Practice Group
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September 5, 2018

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am a supervisory attorney in LAF's Housing Practice Group (HPG), and had the pleasure of supervising Colin Nardone during his 2018 summer internship.

Colin was a wonderful addition to the HPG, which represents low-income clients living in subsidized housing in the Chicago area, who are facing eviction, or termination from the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. Interns assigned to work with the HPG enjoy many of the same responsibilities as full-time HPG staff attorneys. Colin, specifically, was tasked with interviewing clients and collateral sources, researching and exploring legal defenses, drafting motions, preparing cases for trials/hearings, and conducting an administrative hearing, among other things. In addition to completing excellent work, Colin demonstrated an inspiring work ethic and enthusiasm for public service.

Prior to his internship, Colin served low-income individuals and families in Chicago and Philadelphia in a variety of roles, including as a religious brother, a hospital chaplain, and most recently as an AmeriCorps member for a college access and success program. With his previously developed skill sets and his eagerness to learn, Colin performed his duties nearly effortlessly. For example, he spent a tremendous amount of time learning about, and preparing for, an administrative hearing before the Chicago Housing Authority. With his quick grasp of the subject matter, Colin chose to proceed on his own. Colin appeared on behalf of our client, and conducted all aspects of the hearing, including the opening and closing statements, and direct and cross examinations. I recently received the hearing decision, and was pleased (but not surprised) to discover that Colin had won the case—saving our client and her children from almost certain homelessness.

Colin exhibited a nuanced understanding of the plights our clients face, showing empathy not only towards their daily struggles, but towards those of their families and communities as well. Colin's final evaluation, in which he received top marks for his performance this summer, only touches the surface of his meaningful contributions.

I would be happy to discuss Colin further, or to answer any questions you may have. Feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,



Jessica Kalmewicki