

Andrew R. DeMaio

August 11, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

After spending this summer at Legal Services of Northern Virginia (LSNV), I have come away with a number of moving stories and a greater appreciation for the service carried out by the attorneys who serve low-income clients. Due to the generosity of Equal Justice America, I was able to step into this field and help clients face a broad range of topics; however, I spent the majority of my time engaging in housing, consumer, and family law issues.

The LSNV location that I interned at experienced high client volume throughout the summer. As a result, I was regularly able to sit in on intakes, conduct my own intakes, and make follow-up phone calls to clients. Following these client meetings, I conducted legal research to brief the attorneys on the relevant law given the clients' facts. I also reviewed contracts and client files at the courthouse; and I had the opportunity to draft letters, trial outlines, discovery requests, complaints, demurrers, and answers and grounds of defense.

In addition to this client work, I completed long-term assignments that advanced LSNV's mission to efficiently provide legal services to low-income clients. This included researching the competency requirements to execute instruments that are commonly used in elder law, like creating wills and adult guardianships. I also completed a lengthy research memo regarding late fees in federally subsidized housing and I designed a brochure to inform tenants of their rights if their landlord provides uninhabitable living conditions.

Early in my internship, I met a client whose neighbor was trying to get her evicted because he alleged that she and her two small children posed a persistent nuisance. Our client received a federal subsidy that enabled her to rent a condominium in a complex that was otherwise not designated for low-income housing. However, her neighbor owned his condominium and claimed that our client made loud noises throughout the day and night. Even though she informed the neighbor that she could not be the cause, since her family was gone during the day and her disabled son went to sleep early, the neighbor continued to harass her and eventually filed a lawsuit to have her evicted and recover thousands of dollars in damages. After meeting with the client, I reviewed her lease and the condominium's governing documents. I

then conducted research on condominium laws in Virginia. As a result of this research, I aided my supervising attorney in drafting a demurrer, which challenged the neighbor's standing to file suit. Although we anticipated that our client faced a lengthy and costly litigation, the neighbor quickly approached with a beneficial settlement offer that resolved the situation. Our client expressed her gratitude for allowing her to stay in her home and put an end to the harassment at minimal cost.

I also had the opportunity to help clients who encountered problems with products that they purchased. One client purchased a car from a used car dealer for several thousand dollars, only to discover a few weeks later that the car needed thousands of dollars in repairs, which the dealer refused to fix. I conducted the intake with this client and discovered that the dealer engaged in numerous deceptive practices. For example, the client was shocked to hear that the sales contract stated the car was sold "as is." After putting together the timeline with the client, I conducted research on warranties under state and federal law. I discovered that the dealer violated a number of state and federal laws during the sale, and most importantly, that these deficiencies meant that the implied warranties remained in effect. Next, after receiving updates from the client and verifying the key facts, I drafted a complaint that requested damages and other remedies for the client. Although, this case is still in the process of being filed, the client has indicated her commitment to pursuing the lawsuit and she thanked me for helping her obtain justice.

My experiences with these two clients merely serve as examples of the many people that I served this summer at LSNV. The attorneys that I worked with exhibited their strong commitment to helping their clients, and I strived to follow their lead. They also provided me with excellent instruction and balance between tasks that required research, court preparation, and interaction with clients. Overall, I had an excellent experience and I would strongly recommend my internship with LSNV. I am grateful that Equal Justice America provided me with the opportunity give back to my community in such a meaningful way.

Sincerely,

Andrew DeMaio
George Mason University School of Law
Class of 2015