

Dear Dan,

Thank you so much for the opportunity to further my work with children this summer. As I have said before, the sole reason for my pursuing law was to help children who have been abused and neglected. The kids I met during my clerkship at Children's Law Center of Los Angeles have suffered immeasurably and their integrity and resilience has truly humbled me.

I can only describe my experience as the legal version of *ER*, where the attorneys and clerks were manning triage for physically and emotionally injured young people while fighting to better their futures. Prior to joining CLC, I did not have any knowledge of the dependency court system. Los Angeles County has the largest number of children in the dependency and foster systems, and the work that I have been able to partake in encompasses all aspects of the children's lives: housing, family law, immigration, mental and physical health, and education. For example, one of our clients is an eight-year old placed in a foster home, separate from his three siblings, and is suffering from extreme trauma. When I interviewed him, he sat on the floor, curled up in a ball, and denied any knowledge of abuse. He came to our attention because of explicit illustrated stories he created at summer school, depicting sexual activities that no child his age should be aware of. We discovered that his mother had made him watch while she performed sex acts with numerous men. Although it is unclear whether our client was forced to participate in this behavior or not, being forced to watch has obviously had a detrimental effect on him. Our job as his representation is to ensure that he feels safe in his foster home, receives visits with his siblings, and is developmentally on target at school. We must also make sure that he is kept away from his mother until she can prove that she has completed court mandated programs, and that he receives intense trauma therapy.

I wish I could say that our client's story is an anomaly, but unfortunately, my summer with CLC was full of daily encounters of different variations of similar experiences. Having been a victim of sexual abuse when I was younger, there were only two options for me: to avoid situations that may bring up hurtful memories or to strengthen my resolve to help those who have suffered or are suffering from the potentially gruesome effects of child abuse. I chose the latter. Every day was a harrowing yet exhilarating adventure, being able to speak with the children and recording their experiences for possible adjudication. My supervisors were sympathetic to my background and ensured that I was also protected. I could not have asked for a better summer, as working at CLC has cemented my belief that those without a voice are those whose stories must be heard the loudest.

It is often said that it takes a village to raise a child. I have now learned that it also takes attorneys, teachers, physicians, students, and the community as a whole to look out for each child and ensure that he grows up knowing that he is loved and cared for. I am so thankful for the opportunity to meet these children and to work at Children's Law Center as I have now determined that my future is in dependency law.

Sincerely Yours,

Kyuhee Han

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