

TO:

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

My summer here at Legal Aid of Gastonia has been nothing short of amazing. I had the opportunity to successfully represent clients in summary ejection and unemployment insurance benefits hearings. Additionally, I was afforded the opportunity to assist in Medicaid denial appeals, exemptions, and child custody disputes. The feeling of winning a case is indescribable. Being able to use my skill set and knowledge to assist someone who otherwise would not be able to afford legal representation was an extremely rewarding experience. The staff attorneys at my office were all extremely helpful and I made every effort to absorb as much information from them as I possibly could.

The supporting staff at this office, which included two brilliant paralegals, really helped make my transition into the office very smooth. Many times I would go to them with a lot of my questions when the attorneys were busy. This hands-on practical experience is invaluable and I feel that I have gained the essential tools necessary to be an effective advocate. I also learned a great deal about myself as a person during this experience.

My first case was an Unemployment Benefits hearing. Our client was terminated from her employment for allegedly violating the company's rules of conduct and was subsequently denied unemployment benefits. After my initial consultation with the client I immediately began reading the entire Employee Handbook, front to back several times. After gaining a good grasp of what was

required of my client during her time with the employer, I re-interviewed her, this time asking more specific questions and prepped her for the hearing.

I then started writing my opening statement and questions to ask on direct and on cross-examination. After about two weeks of work, I felt fairly prepared for the hearing. My client was somewhat nervous, as this was my first hearing, but I assured her that I would provide competent representation under the supervision of the Staff Attorney. The hearing was a success and we were able to get my client's unemployment benefits reinstated by demonstrating that there was no misconduct committed, and that the employer did not follow its procedures as outlined in the employer handbook. Bringing satisfaction to a population that is traditionally underserved has proven to be the highlight of my law school career.

Hans Pierre  
Charlotte School of Law