

August 23, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I appreciate that organizations such as Equal Justice America exist so that students like me are able to work with vulnerable clients. This summer I was a certified student attorney by Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Rule 3:03. This meant that I was able to appear on behalf of indigent clients and fully represent them under the supervision of an attorney. I completed my work at Greater Boston Legal Services in the Family Law Unit.

The Family Law Unit provides full representation in divorce, custody, and support matters involving survivors of domestic violence. I was assigned cases in varying stages of the divorce process. For some clients, I was their first experience working with a legal professional. I learned to interview clients when I performed intake screenings. The purpose was to gather information and understand the legal issues in each case. This also meant that I had to ask difficult questions about the abuse. I learned to acknowledge the difficulty of the subject matter and offered the clients opportunities to take breaks during the interview. In those moments, I gained credibility from clients who were otherwise reluctant to share their stories. I learned to exercise compassion in a population that faces violence at the hands of loved ones.

One of the most rewarding parts of working this summer was when the clients would begin to feel empowered. So many of the Family Law Unit's clients either fear retaliation if they pursue their goals in the divorce or feel discouraged. In either case, the clients often feel that their desired outcome is not possible. Throughout the summer, I would pursue clients wishes including drafting Motions for Temporary Orders and preparing the accompanying affidavit. Most likely, temporary orders involve custody and support of children. Often, when I showed clients a copy of the work I prepared for them, they would become excited. It seemed powerful to them to boldly ask the Court for what the client needs. The client feels empowered because she has begun to force her abuser to seriously consider her position whether she needs child support or a consistent visitation schedule with the children. She slowly shifts the balance of power. I sincerely appreciated the opportunity to work with clients dealing with highly sensitive personal issues this summer. The experience was both informative and rewarding.

Sincerely,

Lauren Corbin
Northeastern University School of Law
Class of 2017