

August 15, 2016

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer, I had the opportunity to be an EJA Summer Fellow at the Legal Clinic for the Disabled (LCD) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I felt incredibly lucky to be a part of this organization and had an extremely meaningful and rewarding experience throughout the summer. The majority of this internship took place at LCD's Medical Legal Partnerships, where I was able to work at health centers and hospitals to provide legal services to low income individuals in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties.

One of the best parts of this internship was having the opportunity to work in a number of different areas of law, including landlord/tenant cases, SSI and public benefits, protection from abuse orders, and planning documents. Many of these were areas of law in which I had no prior experience, and I enjoyed getting some exposure in each of these areas. I believe that, regardless of the area of law that I end up practicing after law school, this opportunity will allow me to be more well-rounded as an attorney.

In a ten week internship, it is often impossible to see a case through from start to finish, simply because of the speed of the legal process in general. One client whose case I did get to see all the way through was a single father struggling to get health insurance for his young son because his son's mother was claiming the son on her public benefits account. What struck me the most about this man was that he wasn't trying to vilify his son's mother or have anything negative happen to her; he just wanted to make sure his son had health insurance. Together, we were able to gather the necessary documentation so that he could show the benefits office that his son was living with him, and I was able to reach out to the county assistance office on his behalf to help the process move smoothly. Although our interaction was brief and involved only a few short steps, it was extremely encouraging to be able to see something through from start to finish, particularly so because it ultimately led to the desired outcome for my client.

Some of the clients who most strongly impacted me were the several individuals that I worked with who were living in situations of domestic violence. One woman in particular truly challenged me and helped define my goals as a future attorney. This was a woman who had been living with an abusive partner for years who only realized that his behaviors were abusive when a therapist mentioned they might be. Because she was wheelchair-bound, this woman depended on her husband for significant care, and I learned quickly upon speaking with her that he had been using this dependency to abuse and demean her for years. While hers was one of the many cases that I was not able to see through to completion, I was able to speak with her several times to attempt to address the immediate safety concerns she faced while still trying to develop a long-term strategy that would both protect her from her husband and ensure that she would be able to care for herself physically and financially. Her case led me to think more broadly about domestic violence and to see it as much more than just physical or sexual abuse, but to recognize the myriad of behaviors that can constitute abuse, particularly for individuals with

physical disabilities. This woman's story was so incredibly compelling and touching to me that it led me to realize that this is the type of work I want to do as an attorney after I graduate from law school. I hope that my experience in this internship has placed me in the right position to move forward and pursue this career goal.

This summer, I was able to work in several areas of law and to gain a broader understanding of the legal services field, as well as the Medical Legal Partnership model. Working with LCD helped affirm my desire to work in public interest and encouraged me to broaden my awareness of different practice areas. Through this internship, I was able to learn from both the attorneys and the clients that I worked with, and was able to place clients' legal needs in a broader context, which was an incredibly rewarding and educational experience.

I want to thank you very much for allowing me to have this opportunity and for all of the great work that Equal Justice America does for law students throughout the country.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'EJ', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Elizabeth Flanagan
Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law
Anticipated Graduation May 2017