

August 2, 2015

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben:

During my ten weeks at Pisgah Legal Services in Hendersonville, North Carolina, I worked primarily in the field of domestic violence. I spoke with clients and potential clients nearly every day and helped my supervisor(s) evaluate the likelihood that PLS would be able to represent them. I also did some amount of legal research, both in family law and criminal law. I drafted motions, order, letters to clients, and other legal documents. I was also in charge of collecting data for the six counties that PLS primarily serves to determine the prevalence of domestic violence cases as well as how many of those cases had representation; this data was most recently used in the hope of obtaining more funding from the Governor's Crime Commission. My duties varied daily, depending on what was needed by my supervisor to be the most effective use of both of our time. However, because the majority of my time was spent interacting with clients, several stories will stick with me beyond this summer's work.

One situation in particular will always remind me of the importance of public interest lawyers in the great machine that is the justice system. A woman—hardly older than I am—called our office and said that her temporary protective order against her abusive boyfriend had been denied by the district court judge. This was not uncommon; many times, a judge will find that there is insufficient evidence to warrant a protective order. However, when we looked at the documentation in her file, we noticed that the judge did not deny it based on lack of evidence; rather, he denied it because this woman had dismissed a protective order against the same man in 2012. We were outraged. Any number of things could have happened three years prior that caused her to dismiss that action, just like any number of things could have happened since that caused her to need a protective order at this

point. It was no question that we would jump in; although you cannot appeal the denial of a temporary order in North Carolina, the plaintiff still has every right to a hearing for the year-long protective order. For a plaintiff who has no financial resources and is unfamiliar with the law, this fact may go unnoticed. Although the hearing was still continued after I left for the summer, I am proud that my organization was willing to go to bat for a woman whose rights had been trampled by a misunderstanding of the system.

My work this summer has truly cemented my desire to go into public interest work. This story, as well as countless others, impacted me in a way which I will not soon forget. The grant I received from Equal Justice America allowed me to work wholeheartedly without concern for my finances. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Emily Jeske  
J.D. Candidate, 2017  
Wake Forest University School of Law