

September 15, 2022

Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Building II - Suite 201  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Dan Ruben,

For the summer of my 1L year, I had the opportunity to work at Ascend Justice. Ascend Justice is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to empower individuals and families impacted by gender-based violence or the child welfare system to achieve safety and stability through holistic legal advocacy and system reform. I was responsible as an intern for client intake, front desk duty, conducting interviews with clients, and helping clients draft their affidavits. I also had to determine if the client needed an order of protection, a civil no-contact order, and other orders based on the client's relationship with their abuser. From there, I would guide them through the paperwork and, on occasion, attend court, though I would only advise while they would talk with the judge.

The stories have always been challenging and emotional through my interactions with my clients. It was vital for me to remind the clients that what matters is that they are getting help now, even after years of enduring abuse and pain. They would often feel guilty for themselves and their children, but I would reassure them that they are doing the right things now and that it is not their fault. All of the clients I worked with were very appreciative of the efforts I, the other interns, and the attorneys made with their cases. This made this internship so much rewarding. Being able to guide individuals in a tough time in their lives and help them rewrite their stories is one of the best things I can say that I have done so far.

During the summer, I worked with most women and children—some parents on behalf of their children and some clients who were seventeen years old. Abuse can happen at all stages, and it is essential that the clients feel support when they tell their stories. I have worked with clients who were still in high school and went through sexual abuse from their family members or physical abuse from their boyfriends. I have also helped clients who were representing their young children because of sexual abuse that had happened to them. I represented women trying to get an order of protection from their husbands.

These cases were all complex, but it was essential to know that this was the step in the right direction to help them get away from the abuse they had endured for too long. The first thing I would do is listen to the client's story. From there, I would draft an affidavit from what the client told me, including the relevant information for the judge. After the affidavit, I would guide them through the Emergency order of protection forms and explain to them the court process. I did all of this under the supervision of the attorneys. For ten weeks, I had the opportunity to work with clients every day. I thank Equal Justice America for the opportunity to find part of my summer so I can help these individuals in the moments where it matters in their lives.

Sincerely,  
Damia Marshall  
Chicago-Kent College of Law