

EJA Fellowship Update

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America
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Greetings Mr. Ruben:

My name is Sophia Santoyo, a rising 2L at Boston University School of Law. I was honored to receive an EJA Fellowship this summer through my work at the Boston University Civil Litigation & Justice Program. I am extremely grateful for the work I have been able to do and the clients I have been able to serve.

A significant portion of my summer has been working with a client who was a victim of disability discrimination at her place of work. I have had many phone calls with her, getting to know her and her story, researching applicable law, listening to past hearings, and more recently, drafting and submitting responses to Interrogatories and Requests for Production. I was told that our responses to opposing counsel's Interrogatories needed to be extremely thorough and leave nothing out, so I worked tirelessly to bring that to fruition. I had an almost 4-hour phone call with our client, (bless her heart) and worked a 12-hour day to complete our responses. It was extremely satisfying submitting our responses, knowing that our client will be in a better place for it— we are hoping her case will settle and not go to trial so that our client does not have to relive the mistreatment she was put through.

Another client I have been working with this summer was a victim of sexual harassment at her workplace. Additionally, she has several immigration matters to contend with. I met several times with an immigration attorney at BU to understand all the issues my client was facing, so that I could her inform and advise her of the best legal routes. I have gotten to know her as a person and built a professional relationship--- a relationship where she trusts me with sensitive information and communicates to me that she feels I truly care about what she is going through. Hearing that gave me a feeling I don't think I will ever be able to describe.

Dispersed throughout my other work this summer, I have helped other clients with housing matters and unemployment benefits. I helped one client by advising him on representative payee programs— programs which help our clients get their rent paid on time every month and assist with money management. I assisted another client throughout her application for unemployment benefits--- an online application that can be incredibly complicated for people to fill out on their own. I also helped this same client get in touch with the department of transitional assistance and acquire her cash benefits sooner.

My last assignment for the summer is a Motion and Memorandum to reverse the decision that denied our client the necessary disability social security benefits. Our client has been disabled for several years but has been repeatedly denied benefits from the SSA. This is our last chance to appeal the decision before he must apply for benefits all over again. I feel extremely honored to

take on this task and will devote all the time I need to draft and file a memo that leads to a favorable decision for our client.

The work I have been able to do this summer is beyond what I could have imagined, and I am so grateful for the opportunity to assist low-income people in my community who otherwise would not have access to legal representation. I must also thank you and EJA for the opportunity and providing the funding for the amazing work I have had the privilege of undertaking.

Sincerely,

Sophia Santoyo