

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
3007 E. Boundary Terrace, Suite 201
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My summer experience with Northwell Health was educational and impactful, both for me and the community that I had the privilege to serve. The fellowship offered invaluable insight into the intersection of law and healthcare, particularly through my work with the Northwell Health-Hofstra Law Medical-Legal Partnership.

The bulk of my responsibilities revolved around the medical legal partnership; supporting clients who needed legal assistance and conducting comprehensive research on how to establish and improve medical-legal partnerships. Early in the summer, I was tasked with creating a presentation on the benefits of medical legal partnerships and the detailed steps to create and maintain an effective one. The project included: preparing a range of resources, legal agreements, and sample documents. All designed to support the operations of the MLP at Northwell Health. As a part of this effort, I prepared and presented information and suggested policies for expanding and improving Northwell Health's program. This research was incredibly enlightening and has since inspired me to draft a paper on the integrating of healthcare and legal services within clinical settings.

In addition to the research, I worked directly on cases through the Medical-Legal Partnership, assisting Northwell Health's own attorneys in providing legal aid critical to vulnerable patients. My research spanned areas such as immigration law, Medicaid, financial aid programs, and various public benefits and programs. Although there were moments where legal solutions were not feasible, the experience was incredibly rewarding overall, as I was able to offer meaningful help to individuals in my community

Beyond the Medical-legal Partnership, I participated in several other important projects. I supported Northwell Health's Street Health Team, a program that provides healthcare to unhoused individuals. My contributions included updating key documents like consent forms and learning about the unique challenges of delivering and maintaining healthcare for unhoused populations. These programs are essential for providing healthcare to these communities, and, tragically, is often their only avenue to receive any non-emergency healthcare at all.

Another significant program I worked on was developing training materials related to EMTALA (Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act) focused on protecting and respecting the rights of unhoused and mentally ill patients. EMTALA gives everyone the right to emergency

medical care, regardless of their ability to pay or insurance situation. Unfortunately, mentally ill and unhoused patients are often among those whose rights are most frequently violated in emergency settings, sometimes with fatal consequences. To address this issue, I researched every EMTALA violation involving these vulnerable groups since 2017, analyzing both the impact on the patients and the financial penalties imposed on the hospitals. This research became the foundation for training materials designed to educate emergency department staff on how to compassionately and correctly handle these cases. I also delivered presentations to ensure that these critical rights are upheld in future patient interactions.

Working in Northwell Health's legal department exposed me to a wide range of legal areas, including general healthcare law, pharmaceutical and controlled substance laws, immigration law, employment and labor law, and even aspects of copyright law. Although these topics were not the primary focus of my summer, they helped broaden my understanding of how legal regulation and hospital operations intersect. This experience deepened my appreciation and understanding for the complex framework of laws that protect patient safety and ensure the proper functioning of healthcare institutions. By addressing issues like staff burnout, or improper drug handling, these laws play a vital role in safeguarding public health.

In summary, my summer with Northwell Health was an enriching experience that allowed me to contribute directly to my community while gaining a comprehensive understanding of the critical role that law plays in healthcare. The Equal Justice America Fellowship made it possible for me to combine my passion for public service with a growing expertise in healthcare law, and for that I am truly grateful.

Best,
Ethan Namigohar
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