

August 31, 2012

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Aleksandr Katsnelson, EJA Fellowship Recipient

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer, I served as a legal intern for Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (known as "CASLS"; a division of Greater Boston Legal Services) in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I primarily worked on cases involving public benefits (including Social Security and Welfare), as well as housing, elderly law, and disability rights cases. My time at CASLS provided me with a wonderful opportunity to serve indigent citizens and communities in the Boston area. It also gave me a chance to develop valuable legal skills including interviewing, legal research, writing, and organization. I received my own caseload and, in many cases, was given significant independence to determine the best way to proceed.

I am happy to say that I had a number of successes in obtaining much-needed benefits and resources for citizens who often have no alternative resources.

One memorable case that I was assigned involved a client whose Social Security (SSI) benefits were discontinued. The client received an inheritance that he reported to the Social Security Administration (SSA). His benefits were temporarily discontinued, but were supposed to be reinstated after he spent the inheritance (which would again put him below the resource limit). After spending the inheritance, he went to SSA to have his SSI benefits reinstated. Although the process is only supposed to take 30 days, by the time he came to CASLS his case had been open for over 4 months. I was assigned to resolve his case. Part of the issue was that the case manager handling his case would not respond to his phone calls or messages. I made numerous attempts to contact the case manager, but had no success. Finally, after making reasonable attempts, I contacted both the case manager's supervisor and the national SSA hotline (which keeps a log of all calls). After a few weeks of struggling to get my client's benefits reinstated, I finally succeeded. I counted this as a particularly great victory because SSI benefits were my client's sole source of income; without them, he was on the brink of homelessness. Helping my client to regain his stability was wonderful. It not only showed me the value of legal service providers, but also brought to mind the many people who do not know about or have access to such legal services. I wondered, what would have happened to my client if

nobody was able to take on his case? Would his request for reinstatement have simply slipped through the cracks?

Another one of my most memorable cases involved a disabled client seeking psychiatric services (note: because of the distinctiveness of the case, the client's disability and other specific details cannot be provided for confidentiality reasons). Due to this client's disability, she required unique psychiatric services that could only be provided by less than a handful of facilities in the Boston area. She had previously received treatment at these facilities, but her treatment was discontinued because she failed to comply with facility policies due to drug abuse issues. Despite the fact that her only compliance issues were tied to her drug use, and the fact that since then she has been drug free for 3 years (and could provide documentation of this), these treatment facilities refused to take her back. I was assigned to research the possibility of success in filing a request for a reasonable accommodation requesting that the treatment facilities take the client back under a contract specifying strict conditions that my client would need to follow in order to receive services. Also, I was to research whether denial of such a request constituted discrimination based on a disability (in this case, the disability would be drug addiction). I began by researching whether there were any legal precedents in Massachusetts or the 1st Circuit for cases such as my client's. Unfortunately there were none, but I was able to find employment cases specifying how drug addiction is interpreted for disability purposes in the filing of reasonable accommodation requests. Although my findings were somewhat ambiguous, I did uncover that there was a possibility of success if a reasonable accommodation request were to be filed. This case definitely struck a cord for me. The client's drug abuse and psychiatric issues resulted from a very difficult life (involving a severe disability, abuse, and other issues). If the facilities continued to refuse her service, she would simply not receive the services that she desperately needed. In addition, if her disability were not so unique she would be able to find a local service provider much more easily. Although this case has not yet been resolved, I am proud to say that I was able to provide my supervising attorney with insight into whether the claim might succeed.

My time at CASLS was outstanding, and definitely reaffirmed my belief in the value and importance of legal services for the indigent. Thank you Equal Justice America for making it possible for more law students to pursue this option while in school.

Sincerely,



8/31/12

Aleksandr Katsnelson
Harvard Law School J.D. Candidate
Anticipated graduation date: May 2014



GREATER BOSTON
LEGAL SERVICES

Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services Office

July 26, 2012

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Aleksandr Katsnelson; Summer 2012 Legal Internship Evaluation

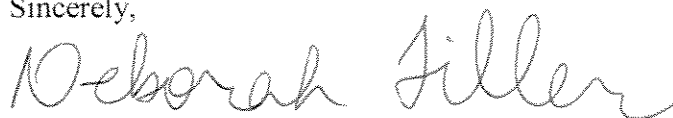
Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to provide an evaluation of the work done by Aleksandr Katsnelson, as a legal intern in our office this summer. I have been Alex's supervisor since he began his internship on May 29, 2012.

Alex has done an excellent job assisting many of our low income elderly and disabled clients with legal problems related to their government benefits (e.g. Social Security disability benefits, food stamps, Medicaid), and housing rights. Alex has demonstrated great compassion for our clients' needs and challenges, as well as deftness in navigating bureaucracies such as the Social Security Administration. Alex is a tremendous notetaker and recordkeeper in clients' case files, and has also exhibited strong legal and internet research skills. Alex's work this summer has enabled our office to represent many more low income clients than we otherwise would have been able to serve.

As always, we are grateful for Equal Justice America's support of law students who are dedicated to learning more about our agency's poverty law practice, and serving our low income clients. If you have any questions about Alex's contributions to our office during his summer internship, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at (617) 603-2716 or DFiller@gbls.org.

Sincerely,



Deborah Filler
Senior Staff Attorney