

Via E-mail

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I had a great time spending the summer in Bay Area Legal Aid, and it is one of the best experience. I worked under the Medical-Legal Partnership in Bay Legal at its San Francisco office. The Medical-Legal Partnership is a collaboration between San Francisco General Hospital and Bay Area Legal Aid, and it functions within two clinics at the hospital. The MLP aims at providing free legal services to patients and families visiting the asthma clinic and the family health center. During the internship, I went to the hospital on two afternoons to screen patients there. For the rest of the time, I worked in the office on cases either opened through screening at the hospital, or through the patients' doctors' referral.

All the clients who were served by Bay Legal are from low-income families. For screening purposes, Bay Legal has its own monthly income limit for the clients to be eligible for its services. Also, most of the clients we served are either U.S. Citizens or Legal Permanent Residents. For non-immigrant clients, we serve them only if there is violence involved. For example, we can help non-immigrants who suffered from domestic violence obtain U-visa. I screened more than eighty patients at the hospital and more than twenty through doctors' referral. Some of them already had cases with Bay Legal and there were new issues coming up, while some of them did not have any legal issues but were willing to contact us in the future. According to my record, seven of the patients I screened were given advice and five were opened

as new cases, among which three are housing cases, one is a medical case and one is a U-visa case. Generally, for each of the cases, I first called the client and did initial screening so that I can determine whether he or she is eligible for our services. If the client is eligible, I would ask them to talk briefly about their stories. Then I will discuss with my supervising attorney about what the next steps are, which laws should I refer to, and who I can turn to for help. I have had several internships before, but what makes this one different is I was allowed to take the lead on all my cases, and the supervision I received was more from a general point of view.

One of my clients is a 75-year-old lady who lives on her husband's retirement plan. Since her monthly income is about \$100 more than the income limit of no share-of-cost Medi-Cal plan, Medi-Cal switched her to the share-of-cost plan, under which she needs to pay \$700 per month before Medi-Cal covers her medical bills. The client does not have money to pay for it and was very upset, so she was referred by her doctor to us through the Medical Legal Partnership. We were able to contact with the eligibility workers, and worked out a plan to get her back on the no share-of-cost plan. By the time I left, I had filed an appeal with the Medi-Cal Appeal Unit, and asked for a redetermination of her eligibility.

Another client who I especially remembered is a man in his 40s and has respiratory disability. His doctor and social workers had tried several times communicating to his landlord about removing the carpet in his home because of his disability, but the landlord refused to do so and had the Department of Building Inspections proved the habitability of the house. When the patient came to us, he had been hospitalized for several months because the hospital could not discharge him unless the allergen is eliminated. I wrote a reasonable accommodation letter to the landlord and communicated directly with the attorney of the landlord about the landlord's obligation to consent to the carpet removal under the Fair Housing Act of California. The

landlord finally agreed to let our client remove the carpet. Then I arranged a meeting between the landlord and our client to figure out the exact requirements from the landlord about carpet removal, including who pays for the removal, how to dispose the carpet, and whether it needs to be installed back when the client moves out etc. By the time I left, the two parties entered into an informal agreement about the removal process, and the client was prepared to let the contractor start the work.

This internship is very spiritually rewarding, and it makes me happy to see people's gratefulness towards the efforts public interest lawyers make. I received many "thanks" from my clients, and it is the best part of the work. I wish I can continue this type of work after graduation, regardless of which sector I will finally choose. I know there is always a place for social justice in my heart when I chose to go to law school, and now I know it better.

Sincerely,

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