

**COLLEEN M. HOYT**

August 2, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I knew when I entered law school that I wanted to explore working in public service. I first discovered my interest in working with elders while working in the private sector and was eager to learn more about how I could help elders through a public interest legal internship. The Elder, Health & Disability Unit at Greater Boston Legal Services was a natural choice. This summer, I had the opportunity to work with many elderly clients on cases ranging from evictions to disability benefits appeals. It was truly rewarding to work with so many wonderful clients and to help make even a small difference in their lives.

One of my most memorable clients was "Pauline," a 77 year old woman from the Greater Boston area. Pauline had many serious medical problems, including lung cancer. Her daughter was instrumental in providing her care so that she could remain in her home. Tragically, Pauline's daughter passed away in January. After her daughter's death, Pauline turned to her other daughter for help. Pauline qualified for a Personal Care Attendant under MassHealth, which meant that she could get the care she needed and her daughter could get paid for providing that care. Unfortunately, Pauline's daughter suffered from substance abuse and could not provide the kind of care that her mother needed. She exploited and took advantage of Pauline, moving into the apartment and then using it for purposes in violation of Pauline's lease. When Pauline's landlord contacted her, asking for her daughter to leave, Pauline agreed. She asked her daughter to move out so she would not be evicted. The daughter protested, arguing that she would be homeless if she couldn't stay with her mother, but Pauline stood up for herself and the daughter moved out. Shortly after, Pauline was injured in a fall and ended up in the hospital and, later, a rehab unit of a nursing home. While she was in the nursing home, she received a letter from her landlord with a Notice to Quit. The landlord was about to begin eviction proceedings against Pauline because, while she had been in the hospital, her daughter had secretly moved back into the apartment without Pauline's knowledge or permission. Pauline contacted Greater Boston Legal Services for help. She was determined not to stay in the nursing home which would be the only option if she were evicted from her home. We helped Pauline's landlord agree to a Reasonable Accommodation which would allow Pauline to stay on the condition that the daughter not return and that Pauline find a new Personal Care Attendant. Pauline stood up to her daughter and demanded that she leave the apartment. Pauline just wanted to get back to her safe and secure home.

Pauline was a very special client because she was determined to take care of herself. Since working at Greater Boston Legal Services, I have heard many heartbreaking stories about elders who were exploited and abused by their adult children, but refused to advocate for themselves because of their need to protect the children. Pauline knew what she wanted: to go home. Pauline did not let herself be taken advantage of by her daughter. She was able to move out of the nursing home and back into her own apartment. I recently found out that Pauline has since passed away and did so in her own home, not a nursing home. I know that she would be glad for her story of self-advocacy to serve to help others in similar situations to do what they need to do to maintain their independence and stay in the community.

Similarly, another client, “Jim,” was determined to stand up for himself. Jim is a 62 year old elder diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. He entered a nursing home after a period of homelessness following his eviction from public housing. We first received the call from Jim when he received a Notice of Intent to Discharge from the nursing home. Jim told us stories of disagreements with nursing home staff and allegations against him that led to the Notice of Discharge. I researched the issue of whether or not the nursing home had the right to discharge Jim and discovered that they had not only failed to meet their burden of evidence that he could be legally discharged, but had also failed to serve him with an adequate notice. I was able to prepare for and argue my first independent hearing before the MassHealth Board of Hearings. While the results of this hearing have still not been released, I feel cautiously optimistic that I was able to help Jim reach a favorable outcome to the discharge. Unfortunately for him, the nursing home has become a toxic living environment. I have reached out to Elder Services providers in his area to connect him with an options counselor to help find new housing. It is my hope that Jim will be able to find a safe and supportive environment in the near future.

I learned a tremendous amount, both substantive and practical, while working with Jim. I had the opportunity to explore MassHealth and state regulations regarding nursing homes and the rights of patients. I also learned how to navigate the complexities of dealing with a patient suffering from a mental health disorder. While at times working with Jim was challenging, it taught me to have patience with clients. It also demonstrated the importance of serving as advocate for those that society most often casts aside.

I had an incredibly rewarding experience this summer as an Equal Justice America Summer Fellow at Greater Boston Legal Services. Not only have I had the opportunity to learn about Social Security, disability, and housing law, I have also had the opportunity to learn from the wealth of experience of the attorneys and paralegals at GBLS. They provided me with fantastic mentorship and guidance and taught me how best to connect and serve my clients. Equal Justice America enabled me to take this opportunity this summer and for that I am most grateful.

With great appreciation,

Colleen M. Hoyt  
J.D. Candidate 2015  
Boston College Law School

  
GREATER BOSTON  
LEGAL SERVICES  
*...and justice for all*

August 15, 2013

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

**Re: Colleen Hoyt**

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Colleen Hoyt worked as a legal intern in the Elder, Health, and Disability unit of Greater Boston Legal Services from May, 2013 until August, 2013. Her assignments included conducting client interviews on the phone and in person, providing legal advice and counsel to elderly callers and their caregivers, performing legal research, and drafting various written documents including legal advice letters to clients. She also interacted with clients, elder agency providers, court personnel, and state and federal agency employees. She successfully represented a nursing home resident in an appeal of intent to discharge by carrying out legal and factual research and preparing the client for the hearing.

Colleen made a significant contribution to the work of Greater Boston Legal Services and to our elderly and disabled clients. She has outstanding research and writing skills, and she is a good advocate. She is conscientious and reliable; she is motivated, and often took the initiative to seek out ways to help clients. In interviews with clients, she was sensitive and empathetic to their situations, and also able to efficiently determine legal issues. She has good judgment and common sense, which served her well in assisting our clients with their often complex set of issues.

Colleen worked on a variety of issues affecting our elderly and disabled clients and managed her time in a beneficial way which allowed her to meet her responsibilities in the cases she was assigned.

I really enjoyed working with Colleen, and I appreciate the assistance she provided, both to me and to our clients.

Sincerely,



Wynn A. Gerhard

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August 15, 2013  
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Senior Attorney  
Elder Law Unit