

September 12, 2013

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This letter will attempt to summarize my extraordinary experience at the Alliance for Children's Rights, and capture some of the gratitude I feel toward Equal Justice America for their incredible generosity in granting me a summer fellowship.

I simply cannot fully express how valuable my summer was. Going into my the summer, I knew that I wanted to continue on a path towards a public interest career, but was not sure specifically which population or legal issue to focus on. I had experience working with children's rights at Public Counsel the semester before, and had occasionally worked with the youth population during the previous summer at Mental Health Advocacy Services. When I spoke with the Alliance about their work representing clients in the foster care population, I thought it would be a good next step to specify my legal interests and improve my legal skills.

I came away with a wealth of experience and an increased passion to advocate for children in need of legal services. I worked with my supervising attorney on a program that advocates for children in the foster care population regarding their education rights. One key issue we focused on was partial credit advocacy and proper class placement for the clients; because many of the clients had numerous home setting placements, they often encountered broken communication between the various schools and school districts responsible for their education. Many students had taken- and passed- the same course more than once at two different schools. Others had special education programs in place that were subsequently lost in transition. This pattern of behavior and lack of communication is illegal, and as you can imagine, highly disruptive to clients who are already in a vulnerable state.

I cannot specifically identify any of these clients or delve into personal aspects of their cases due to confidentiality standards set by the organization. However, I can say that they are some of the most intelligent, resilient, courageous people that I have ever met. A letter describing how amazing these clients are always seems to fall short of the sincerity I hope to express here, but believe me when I say that I learned so much from these kids, and by working with them on a regular basis through the Alliance, I now know that I want to do this for as long as I can. The Alliance was a perfect place to hone the legal skills I began with and the perfect place to develop new skills to use moving forward. I was well supervised, but given the space to learn on my own. I was guided through standards of client communication and professional conduct, but encouraged to be creative as well. In short, for 10 brief weeks I had the perfect job. I will

continually think back to this summer as a seminal step in my legal education and formative time in a brief, but rewarding, legal career.

This experience was possible only through the aid of others, including the Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship program. As you know, many legal non-profit organizations simply do not have the resources to compensate their intern base at the same rate that private firms do. These students, and the organizations that they work for, depend on the kindness of programs like this to keep afloat and advocate for their clients. Part of having the perfect job described above was knowing that I could afford it, and Equal Justice America was an indispensable factor in understanding that I had enough support to take on this position. By helping me, you've given me the foundation to try and help others, and for that I am very grateful. Thank you for giving me this opportunity, and I wish nothing but the best of luck for Equal Justice America as you continue fighting for young law students and their pursuit of justice for others. If there is any way that I can be of assistance in the future, please do not hesitate to ask; I would be happy to inform others of how instrumental Equal Justice America has been in allowing me to take one more step in this incredible journey.

Sincerely,

Dean Conklin
Loyola Law School, Class of 2014
Co-Chair, Public Interest Law Foundation
Community Service Chair, Student Bar Association
Editor-In-Chief, Development, Los Angeles Public Interest Law Journal

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August 28, 2013

Dan Ruben
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Dear Mr. Ruben,

This letter is in regards to Dean Conklin's legal internship at the Alliance for Children's Rights, a non-profit legal organization that protects the rights of impoverished, abused, and neglected children and youth in Los Angeles. This summer Dean worked with the Alliance's Education Program, providing direct education advocacy and assisting in impact litigation. Dean provided critical assistance to the Education attorneys and maintained a high level of professionalism, while meeting our rigorous deadlines.

Dean played a critical role in supporting the Alliance's partnership with First Star UCLA Bruin Guardian Scholars Academy ("First Star Academy"). The First Star Academy is a unique program that brings 28 high school-aged foster youth to live on UCLA's campus for 5 weeks. This was the third summer that this cohort participated in the program. During their time on campus, the youth participate in college-level classes, remedial high school coursework, and a variety of life skills trainings. As the legal partner to the First Star Academy, the Alliance provides extensive education advocacy for the participating youth. In order to best serve the youth, the Alliance decided to conduct education evaluations this summer and meet with the youth and their caregivers to provide recommendations for high school graduation and college planning.

Throughout the summer, Dean collected the education records for the 28 participating youth and drafted the education evaluations for each youth. In doing so, he contacted every school that the youth attended between kindergarten and 10th grade and collected the youths' grades, behavioral records, testing results, and special education records. Under the Education Program's supervision, he synthesized these records into the Alliance's education evaluation form and then conducted a graduation check for each of the youth. Based on the results of those reviews, he also worked with the Education attorneys to provide high school graduation and college planning recommendations that were appropriate for each youth.

Following the completion of the evaluations and recommendations, Dean attended meetings with each of the youth and their caregivers on UCLA's campus. While the Education attorneys led the first several meetings, Dean eventually took the lead on the latter half of the meetings. He did an excellent job communicating difficult information to the clients and their caregivers and maintained a positive tone throughout. When several of the youth did not wish to participate in the meetings because they did not want to discuss their histories of school discipline and instability, Dean sat with them and convinced them that the meetings would be productive and useful.

In addition to his work with the First Star Academy youth, Dean also provided critical support to an impact litigation suit that is seeking to preserve foster youths' rights at California's community colleges. Dean drafted two memos that provided crucial information for the Alliance's attorney. The first memo he drafted was about the exhaustion of administrative remedies. The other memo he wrote focused on standing issues. Both of these memos were used to ensure that we followed all procedural steps required by the courts. Dean's writing significantly improved while working with the Alliance's attorneys over the course of the summer.

We truly enjoyed working with Dean this summer and thank Equal Justice America for providing him financial support.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at p.fern@kids-alliance.org or (213) 368-6010.

Thank You,

Paige Fern, Esq.
Education Program