

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer, I had the opportunity to be a legal intern at The Legal Aid Society, Manhattan office, with the Juvenile Rights Practice. My internship experience provided me with the opportunity to learn about the New York Family Court system and also the importance of ensuring that every child receives an advocate for his/her best interests.

The best aspect of my internship experience was the hands-on nature of the job. From early on, I became directly involved in interviewing clients and observing court proceedings. I also helped attorneys by researching and writing memorandums of law that pertained to our clients' issues and needs. I found this aspect of my internship extremely satisfying because it provided me with an opportunity to apply the skills I learned throughout my 1L year to a real life situation that would affect the lives of our clients. Most importantly, I had the opportunity to meet and talk to clients, something that I did not experience in school. The extent of client contact provided me with real perspectives of who our clients were and what they needed or wanted.

One of the highlights of my internship was helping an attorney with a case that involved a 2-year old client. Our client was removed from the care and custody of her mother because abuse/neglect was suspected after a hospital discovered that our client had a 10-12 day old fracture. I was responsible for collecting the medical records and securing a doctor's opinion of the records to discover whether or not the 2-year old's fracture occurred from abuse or an accident. After hearing another doctor adamantly testify that the injury occurred from abuse, I was surprised when I learned from another doctor that the injury was not indicative of abuse.

The contradicting medical opinions made me realize even more that we had to ensure proper advocacy for the mother and for the child. Without someone to properly question and investigate the medical opinions of the doctors, the child could be removed from the mother based upon incorrect findings of abuse. On the other hand, the child could be returned to the mother when in fact, the injury occurred from abuse. Knowing what happened in Court would directly affect and impact our clients' lives provided a better sense of what it meant to be a true advocate.

My internship provided me with a real perspective on what it means to be an advocate, not only for children, but for those whose voices often go unheard. The work was rewarding, but most importantly, it provided me with a renewed awareness of my role as an aspiring advocate and the importance of providing legal services to the indigent. Without the support from Equal Justice America, my experiences would not have been possible. I thank you so much for the generous support and hope that other law students like myself will continue to benefit from the fellowship.

Sincerely,
Deborah Yi

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