

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

August 31, 2010

Dear Mr. Ruben

First of all, I would like to thank you for awarding me with an Equal Justice America fellowship. I feel extremely privileged to have been selected. This past summer, I worked at the Legal Aid Justice Center (LAJC) in Charlottesville, Virginia. Working at the LAJC was an exciting, edifying, and fun experience. I gained skills and friendships that will endure after the summer.

I was assigned to work with a supervisor who mainly dealt with elder law issues and the first assignment I did was a title search on behalf of a client. This was interesting because I had never done such work. It involved going to the courthouse and searching through documents from the 1960's. It gave me a broader perspective on legal research and sent me out of my comfort zone on the first day. Additionally, through my work dealing with elder law issues I learned a lot about the Medicare and Medicaid systems. My work with my supervising attorney frequently involved writing letters to clients and memos on relevant legal issues.

Another interesting activity I did for my supervising attorney was research the availability of nursing home inspection reports online. I looked at each states' online resources for the information and compiled a report detailing whether each state had the documents and if so how accessible they were. Even though this project took a lengthy amount of time, I enjoyed it because it required meticulous focus and I also had the opportunity to learn about policy in the area of nursing homes.

Although I was assigned to an elder law attorney, for a large part of the summer I also worked with employment law attorneys; for them, I mainly performed employment related intakes. For most of my placement, I was the point contact for individuals seeking employment related legal assistance. Through the intakes, I was able to obtain a rounded knowledge of Virginia's unemployment benefits system. I was also given the opportunity to participate in in-office client interviews. One particularly interesting opportunity I had was to draft a letter to the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) arguing for the reassessment of the VEC's denial of unemployment benefits to a client.

Another interesting project that I worked on was an investigatory one. I went through files and documents pertaining to an elderly woman's finances in order to assist the attorneys in discovering potential fraud on the part of the woman's relatives. Because of her mental deterioration, she was unable to see what was happening to her finances. After the

discoveries from the investigation, she was able to obtain legal assistance from the LAJC. I believe that this is a success because without this work, this woman could still be taken advantage of without her knowledge.

In the course of my experiences speaking with clients and potential clients, I realized how much people appreciate having a source of legal assistance. My frequent exposure to clients gave me the ability to have a greater understanding of the client population that I was helping and it was the highlight of my summer experience.

Sincerely,

Estelle Hebron-Jones  
University of Virginia School of Law '11