

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I came to Georgetown Law in order to pursue a legal career of representing individuals who had experienced gender violence. Thus, for my first summer internship, I jumped at the chance to represent mostly domestic violence and sexual violence survivors as an intern in the Family Law Unit at Philadelphia Legal Assistance in Philadelphia, PA. I greatly depended on the assistance from Equal Justice America this summer, and I appreciate that I was able to focus on my passion of directly serving survivors because of the support from EJA.

While at Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA), I assisted about fifty clients. I assisted these clients with their custody, protection from abuse, child support, and spousal support cases. All of my clients were below the poverty line, with many clients in extreme poverty. Many of my clients depended on government services, such as food stamps or social security disability benefits, some of my clients were homeless, and some of my clients only had a few dollars to live on for the week. Most of my clients also experienced domestic violence from the opposing party in their case, and sexual violence from either the opposing party or someone else in their life. For example, I worked with one client who had to flee her home and state in order to leave an abuser. Thus, she needed extensive assistance from me in her custody battle since she was no longer in the area and thus did not have access to her child. I also assisted another client who had been raped by the father of her child in her custody case. However, once she got to court, she was too nervous and ashamed to tell the judge that the father had raped her, and thus the father was awarded shared physical custody. I worked with her to bolster her confidence in court to bring up her rape, streamline her arguments so she could be more focused, and to gain her trust so she would know that she was not alone in her emotional and trying custody case.

PLA has a very organized legal internship program that provided us with a system of assisting clients. First, I would perform an initial intake of a client either in person or over the phone. During this intake, I would ask a number of questions to figure out the client's goals, what were the biggest obstacles that the client faced in achieving those goals, and other general issues that the client faced (whether related to family law or not). Once we established their goals and obstacles, I would provide information about custody, abuse, and support law in Pennsylvania. If they had an upcoming court date, I would assist in preparing their arguments for court. If they did not have a court date, we would work together to decide if they should file a petition or complaint for a court date. I drafted numerous documents for many of my clients, including complaints for custody, petitions to modify custody, motions for expedited relief, motions for a home investigation or mental health evaluation, and many letters to judges on behalf of clients. I had to stay meticulously organized so that I could efficiently follow up with clients over the phone or email. If the case was particularly complicated or sympathetic, I would present the case

to the attorneys for possible representation, or I would refer the case to an outside organization that could provide representation.

I sincerely enjoyed my internship at PLA. I came to law school to help survivors, and I was able to fulfill that dream this summer. I always thought that I would want to work in direct legal services, and through this internship I was able to learn that I indeed love direct legal services and that it is a good fit for me. I am confident now that I want to pursue a public interest career in direct legal services, and the support from Equal Justice America gave me the opportunity to find that confidence.

Sincerely,

Melissa McClure  
Georgetown University Law Center '18



**PLA** | PHILADELPHIA  
LEGAL ASSISTANCE

718 ARCH STREET, SUITE 300N  
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106-1535  
TELEPHONE: 215.981.3800  
FAX: 215.981.3860  
WWW.PHILALEGAL.ORG

August 9, 2016

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I write regarding the summer Equal Justice American Fellowship of Melissa McClure. As you are aware, Ms. McClure's fellowship took place at Philadelphia Legal Assistance (PLA). PLA is the federally funded legal services provider for Philadelphia County. PLA provides services to Philadelphia's indigent community including community education, advice, referral, *pro se* assistance and representation primarily in three substantive areas; family law, public benefits and consumer/housing. I supervised Ms. McClure in the Family Law Unit.

Ms. McClure reached out to PLA to work in the Family Law Unit as a summer student intern. Ms. McClure quickly proved herself to be an excellent advocate and immediately stood out as a student who was dedicated to working with clients. Although she did not have prior family law experience, Ms. McClure was able to quickly grasp the intricacies of family law which enabled her to provide quality assistance. As an advocate, Ms. McClure handled a caseload of approximately 50 clients. Her work for these clients included drafting pleadings and advising them on how to present their case to the court and how family law proceedings work in Philadelphia.

Ms. McClure's dedication to our clients have proven she is committed to working with indigent clients and that she has the ability and desire to dedicate herself to a cause in which she believes.

Ms. McClure has been an outstanding advocate and was a tremendous asset to PLA and has proved to be an outstanding leader at this early stage in her legal career.

Thank you for your consideration and for funding amazing young leaders like Ms. McClure.

Very truly yours,

Emilja Golanska-Kovac  
Senior Staff Attorney  
Philadelphia Legal Assistance