

August 29, 2014

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

Mr. Ruben:

My name is Guadalupe Perez and I am a 2L at DePaul University College of Law. This summer I had the privilege of working at LAF Chicago. LAF Chicago dedicates itself to providing civil legal services to people living in poverty. LAF has several working groups that enables them to serve individuals through a variety of legal services and also serves to target the fact that individuals living in poverty may often have more than one legal problem.

During my summer at LAF, I worked both with the Employment and Immigration at LAF. I believe that working for two different groups allowed me to see how different groups of law interact and how an individual's legal problems are complex and need different expertise. We had one such client who came in with both an employment and immigration issue. The client in question was being sexually harassed at her place of employment. Unfortunately, because the client did not have a legal immigration status, the client felt powerless and unsure how to proceed. We were able to not only explain to the client what her legal options and inform her on how each one of them were affected by her immigration status, but we were able to guide the client on how to proceed with Human Rights Commission. Working with immigration allowed me to see how immigration dealt with the remedy side of her legal status. I learned so much working with this client, not only regarding immigration and employment law, but also regarding interviewing a client who had a sensitive issue. I learned of the importance of following up with a client and the importance of communication with different lawyers and the client itself. One important lesson was how empowered clients can become once they have been properly informed. Once clients know how to proceed, many become their own advocates and ensure that everything gets done.

There were shorter cases were I was able to see a quick resolution. I was able to conduct administrative telephone hearings with clients who were at risk of losing their unemployment benefits. I drafted memorandums that were sent to Cook County. I was also able to see a couple of those hearings in person. I also had the opportunity to interview clients who might be eligible for a U-Visa. I did the initial intake for a couple of clients who were the victims of a violent crime. I interviewed them a couple of times to determine their eligibility. I informed them of their options and worked with them to stay in touch with the Chicago Police Department in order to better provide information. It was this type of work that continues to appeal to me. I love the fact that you can not only resolve people's legal issues but that you can educate them in order for them to become their own advocates and agents.

I learned a lot at my time in LAF. I learned what being a public interest lawyer means and the different roles that you are able to play in an individual's life. I learned what it means to be passionate about the work that you do and work with people who are passionate about their work. I am grateful to Equal Justice America for allowing me to spend my summer doing what I want to do and to learn so much.

Sincerely,

*Guadalupe Perez*

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DePaul University College of Law

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