

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
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Dear Mr. Ruben,

I sincerely appreciate being a recipient of Equal Justice America Fellowship. This past summer I worked as a legal intern at Greater Boston Legal Services in Boston, MA. I worked under the direction of Dan Manning, the Litigation Director in their Administration Unit. I was tasked to work on several cases some of which had been worked on prior to my arrival. The cases mostly involved disability rights and ADA accommodations and access concerns. I have been visually impaired birth, thus this work meant a great deal to me personally.

My initial task was to research class certification criteria for a group of disabled plaintiffs who were trying desperately to obtain services from a local governmental agency. Due to their varying disabilities it was hard to determine needs, thus class certification was uncommonly challenging. I was deeply interested in helping to achieve this goal because this agency is in need of change on a large scale as many individuals were going without critical services to the disability population because of their disability.

Additionally, I performed follow up with previous plaintiffs regarding ADA accommodations and hospital access issues, which GBLS assisted them with prior to my start. These access issues were brought to the attention of several area hospitals about a year earlier. These hospitals are now in the early stages of upgrading facilities and methods of dealing with disability. Mr. Manning had tasked me with follow up to see if these clients had noticed any improvements in any their recent trips to any of the hospitals. Additionally, this helped my understanding the variety of issues which we then built into a white page on accessible technology and equipment which we could use to inform hospitals and state officials and their agencies. This white page will also be used in future hospital access litigation.

I also spent part of my time working with a client who had experienced service animal access barriers at a local hospital. While the ADA has clearly defined that service animals are allowed in a public area of any hospital, we sought to implement a broader access policy. I had to compare and contrast several different service animal policies on a local and national level to come up with a reasonable policy to allow service animals in other “private” areas of the hospital. Our opponent was willing to work with the client to develop a policy they had some reservations. In drafting the policy it was necessary to include the hospital’s concerns for patients and staff, but allow the most access possible to blind or visually impaired patients or visitor.

During my time with GBLS I spent time analyzing and summarizing the recent DOJ updates to ADA compliance, as well looking to other agencies for legal support on these different issues. Finally, I aided another student with research on a housing unit case, and was able to work with another lawyer on a Rule 11 sanction issue.

While I spent a majority of time doing research for Mr. Manning I felt that what I was doing was important to GBLS's strategy and plans for helping the clients I met throughout the summer. I feel honored to have had the opportunity to work with GBLS. I feel that the clients I worked with were able to see positive results from the work that I had done. I feel that GBLS was a great place to intern as I had access to many different resources and staff to make sure I was being productive and helpful to the clients and to Mr. Manning. I would like to thank you again for the EJA Fellowship, and I look forward to applying the knowledge I gained from this past summer to next summer, and in my future career.

Regards,

Jason Savageau