

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Now that my time at the SeniorLAW Center has come to a close, I am excited to look back at the past twelve weeks and all that I have learned and accomplished.

The first week of my internship was filled with rigorous training about the SeniorLAW Center's policies, confidentiality, intake procedures, electronic filing system, and just about every aspect of SeniorLAW Center's day-to-day operations. Almost every hour was filled with some sort of training, from the law of mortgage foreclosure to how to run the front desk. After approximately forty-two hours of training, I was ready to start handling cases.

I started getting a few cases during my second week. These cases were fairly simple drafting of personal planning documents, such as Power of Attorneys and Wills. We had spent a lot of time training to draft these types of documents and attended an out of office training program. Slowly, over the next few weeks, I began receiving more complex cases. I also went from observing intake to conducting intake.

As I became more acclimated with SeniorLAW Center, I was entrusted with a case that not only involved a large amount of money, but also had the potential to gain media coverage and affect a large number of people. Several different agencies and law firms began working together on what would become known as the "Landvest" cases. These cases involve approximately 118 properties in Philadelphia. A man named Robert Coyle had entered into various agreements with clients, including lease-to-purchase agreements, verbal agreements to transfer property, and other types of real estate contracts on these properties. He took out a \$7,000,000.00 loan on all these properties and defaulted on that loan. The owners of the properties, many of whom thought they owned their house outright, received notices in the mail that their house was going to be sold at sheriff's sale and they had less than two months to find somewhere to live. Our client, an elderly gentleman in deteriorating health, had entered into a verbal agreement with Coyle to transfer the deed to the house our client had inherited when his parents died, and in return, Coyle would transfer the deed of an abandoned house he owned to our client and Coyle would pay off \$20,000.00 in credit card debt for our client. Our client transferred his deed to Coyle and moved into the other house, but Coyle never paid \$20,000.00 nor did he transfer his deed to our client. Facing a sheriff's sale and the prospect of being homeless, our client came into our office, distraught and begging for help. We agreed to help him with his case, and joined forces with the other agencies involved to stop the sheriff's sales and force the bank's attorneys into conciliation conferences. I was given the task of writing the complaint for the Common Pleas Court of Philadelphia. The case is ongoing, but for now we have been successful in keeping our client in his house, and he has shown more gratitude than any of the other clients I met this summer.

Because I obtained my certification at the beginning of the summer, I was allowed to represent a client in front of the judge during a Protection From Abuse hearing. The judge decided to torture me and ask me questions she would never ask a practicing attorney, but I won the case and successfully obtained a three-year Protection From Abuse Order for my client, the longest you can receive under Pennsylvania law. It was exciting to be by myself in front of the

judge, and it was certainly a learning experience I will never forget. Plus, not only is my client protected, I can always say I won my first case!

I helped some of the most vulnerable population in Philadelphia. These are people living off an often very low fixed income. They are not familiar with the law, and get taken advantage of more than any other group. They usually blamed themselves for being, in their words, “so stupid.” It was heartbreaking to hear them blame themselves for someone else’s crimes and vindictive behavior. It was especially heartbreaking when the person on the other side was the senior’s own child. The most difficult aspect of the job was not being able to help every client that came through our door. The one thing that kept me from giving up on humanity was the gratitude I received when I was able to keep somebody’s utilities on, or when I simply drafted somebody’s will, or how thankful some of the clients were when all they got was a return phone call during telephone intake. That was my favorite part of this summer.

I am leaving this internship with a broad spectrum of knowledge that I did not have when I started. I have learned a lot about many different areas of the law, including mortgage foreclosure, family law, landlord/tenant, utilities, financial exploitation, and personal planning. I have filed numerous court documents, interacted with many different types of people, and worked with many of the public interest organizations in the Philadelphia area. Not only did my knowledge of the types of law SeniorLAW Center practices grow, but my knowledge of public interest law as a whole expanded as well. It was also a personally fulfilling opportunity. Every member of the staff was eager to help me learn and enjoy my summer, and they certainly accomplished that goal.

Thank you for the opportunity to help people who truly deserve it.

Sincerely,

Jenna Fliszar
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