

May 15, 2012

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

Thank you for the Spring Fellowship through Equal Justice America. During my time at Virginia Legal Aid Services in Lynchburg, I have gained invaluable experience in the practice of law and have been able to help those in need. Working at Legal Aid has given me the opportunity to learn about the legal issues that are relevant to many low-income citizens in the area, and the best way to serve those needs. The internship has also helped me to gain perspective for how difficult it can be to support a family and to deal with issues such as disability, loss of a job, or loss of Medicaid.

My first day at Legal Aid, I met my supervising attorney, Jeremy White. Jeremy was very patient and always gave clear instructions on the assignments he would give me to do. Even though I only worked one day a week (my day free from regular law classes), I felt like I was welcomed into the office and integrated with the other staff members. I attended the attorney meetings where the lawyers would discuss the top five cases on which each was working, and staff meetings where the goals of everyone working in the office were set forth and past goals discussed.

The cases I worked on included issues in bankruptcy law, unemployment law benefits, Medicaid and Medicare, and property law, among others. Along with researching and going to the courthouse with the other attorneys, I was assigned to a particular unemployment law case and worked with the client as the primary attorney from start to finish. This case was an exciting experience because I met the client during the client interview, researched the claim, contacted the necessary parties for release of documents, and represented the client during his unemployment hearing at the VEC. The case had a successful outcome, but regardless of the decision, it was a good experience being able to help a client who was treated improperly. Sometimes such situations can be remedied by law, and other times, this will not be an option. Either way, it felt good to be able to listen and give advice.

I have recently been considering the idea of opening my own practice. My experience at Legal Aid has helped in many ways. First, I was able to see how an efficient office can work well, even with limited funds. Second, I was able to gain experience with the issues that many low-income clients may have, which has given me an idea as to where to go and what to do with my pro-bono time. Finally, the internship has shown how important it is to work with other attorneys whom you can go to for advice and counsel. Providing the best legal service for a client often means looking at a case from a variety of perspectives. The attorneys at Legal Aid

were interested in the work the others were doing and would often bounce ideas off of each other to get the best result for each client. My time at the office was truly enjoyable and well worth the time. I only hope I did as much for VLAS as it did for me.

Thank you again for your support in this experience.

All the best,

Jennifer Kruidenier
Graduate 2012
Liberty School of Law
MBA Candidate 2013