

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II- Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road,
Milothian, VA 23112

September 15, 2009

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I interned with a wonderful organization, the Texas Advocacy Project (TAP). TAP is a nonprofit organization that provides legal protections to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault as well as their children. In our society, domestic violence issues have escalated dramatically in recent years. Because of the familial element of the abuse, often the severity of the situation is underestimated and misunderstood. Furthermore, in order to make sense of the situation, blame is often shifted to partners who stay in an abusive environment.

However, the situation is far more complicated than it may originally appear. Because victims of domestic abuse seeking legal protections are disproportionately members of the low-income bracket, they often feel hopeless in seeking protection from abusive partners or in finding alternatives. The Texas Advocacy Project seeks to provide aid and options to these types of victims.

While interning at the Texas Advocacy Project I had the opportunity to participate in a variety of different types of legal projects. A substantial amount of my time was dedicated to direct client contact. Throughout the summer, each intern was assigned to about five different Assisted Pro Se clients and served to build a rapport with them, compile the relevant information for the case, and develop their case through final divorce proceedings. Therefore, I was able to maintain contact with several of the very people that were benefitting from our services. I additionally had the chance to draft and file several different family law documents and actually witness how my work progressed through a case. The other major component of my summer consisted of large-scale legal research projects examining 14th Amendment equal protection and due process issues with indigent clients. Because so many of the victims utilizing the Texas Advocacy Project's services were indigent litigants, the organization was very dedicated to scrutinizing the process for pro se litigants and ensuring that the court system was fair and just.

Having the opportunity to spend my first summer in law school at an organization like the Texas Advocacy Project was invaluable to me. Never before did I realize just how daunting encountering the legal system can be without having had specific experience or education as to how to navigate it. Complicated by the fact that the people reaching out to the Texas Advocacy Project were in dire need of immediate aid, the significance of the work in which I was participating became quickly evident and clear. Looking back and realizing that I was able to assist multiple people in achieving independence, safety, and peace of mind for themselves and their children is more than I think I even anticipated in entering law school. I went into this summer unsure of the type of law I wanted to practice, but as a result of it I feel more committed than to ever to furthering the public interest cause.

Thank you so very much for providing me the funding that allowed me to participate in this experience.

Sincerely,
Jessica Cohen
University of Texas School of Law, 2011