

August 23, 2010

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I began my fellowship at SeniorLAW Center in Philadelphia, PA under the supervision of Executive Director Karen Buck on May 17, 2010. During the ensuing twelve weeks, I learned about legal services in general, but particularly the challenges of working with senior citizens. In the process I discovered much about myself, knowledge that will allow me to more effectively pursue my personal goals throughout my lifetime.

SeniorLAW Center assists older Philadelphians, aged sixty or older, with a variety of legal problems. Our clients contact us either by walking into our office during scheduled intake walk-in hours or by calling our intake telephone line. While at SeniorLAW Center, I conducted intake many times both over the telephone and in person.

Intake, as many other interns will undoubtedly tell you, can be very stressful but also very rewarding. Any and every problem I could have imagined I have heard this summer during these initial interviews. I would like to share with you one particular memorable experience.

A very kind older woman came into our lobby and was signed in at the front desk. I greeted her and invited her into my office so that she could speak with me about her legal problem. After taking some initial information, I asked her why she had come into our office. She immediately began sobbing, profusely apologizing for such, and speaking in broken and fragmented sentences. I asked her to wait a brief moment, while I retrieved a box of tissues and a cup of water. When I returned she was able to compose herself, and upon my questioning it became apparent that she presented a potential case of abuse and so may be eligible for a protection from abuse order. I contacted one of the attorneys in our office that routinely handled such matters to complete the interview, as is protocol.

A few days later I was invited into the office of a senior attorney that also handles such matters routinely. I saw our client in his office and she greeted me with a smile. In just a few short days, our office had managed to improve her personal situation and begin the process of obtaining a permanent protection from abuse order against her abuser. I knew then that I had been an integral part in changing the life of a senior citizen, a member of one of our society's most vulnerable populations, forever.

This story is one of many that I could tell about my experience this summer. It is one I am grateful for and will remember forever.

Sincerely,  
Joel Lombardi  
Albany Law School  
Class of 2011