

August 30, 2009

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer I worked as a law clerk with Public Counsel, the largest pro bono law office in the nation. I primarily worked with Public Counsel's Homeless Prevention Law Project, which provides many services to the homeless and indigent communities. Under this project, Public Counsel has provided pro bono representation to many homeless individuals before administrative agencies, partakes in policy advocacy, and provides clinics to assist the homeless.

My primary focus this summer was with Public Counsel's General Relief Advocacy Project (GRAP), which is a program where we provided advice and advocacy to homeless and impoverished individuals at offices of the Department of Public Social Service (DPSS) in Los Angeles County. We were trained in public benefits law and policy. In turn, we trained law students and volunteer attorneys in public benefits law. Subsequently, we also supervised these groups of volunteers at offices of DPSS, where they would advocate on behalf of clients.

Through this project I became aware of the difficulties many individuals face in receiving the benefits and services to which they are legally entitled. Without these benefits, many individuals are at risk of becoming chronically homeless or maintaining their chronically homeless status. The process of obtaining and maintaining benefits, like general relief or food stamps, is more complicated than I expected. As a result, many individuals, especially those suffering from mental health issues, encountered many hurdles to obtaining benefits. Helping these individuals on-site at the DPSS offices was very productive and in a small way, it appeared as if I was making a small part of the overall system more efficient. I also became more aware of the many factors that contribute to homelessness and the difficulty in escaping such a hard life.

In my future years as an attorney, I plan to continue to work with this population in hopes of decreasing the number of people who live on the streets or who are on the verge of becoming homeless.

Sincerely,

Julie Choi
UC Hastings College of the Law
JD Candidate, May 2011