

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to thank you for the Equal Justice America fellowship I was awarded for summer 2012, which allowed me to work at an unpaid internship at Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) in Cambridge, MA. Thanks to EJA's generosity, I was able to serve a number of clients on issues ranging from Social Security disability claims, to eviction proceedings, to reinstatement of welfare benefits.

During my ten weeks at CASLS, I handled an independent caseload of around ten clients. Several of my cases involved clients who were in the process of applying for disability benefits, either through the Social Security Administration or Massachusetts's equivalent state run program. I read through and summarized several clients' full medical records, gaining an in-depth view of the physical and mental conditions that affected their lives. On a few cases, I was able to present my summaries to my supervisor with a recommendation on whether or not I thought they had a case. It was exciting to begin building a case in favor of a client with fibromyalgia and a child with cognitive and attention-related disabilities. On the other hand, having to tell one client we would not be able to represent him was one of the most difficult parts of my summer, and threw into stark light the frustration of the resource constraints that CASLS faces on a regular basis.

I also spent a significant amount of time negotiating and coordinating with local agency personnel. One of my clients was a twenty-something mother of two children whose welfare benefits had been stopped because she was not meeting the state's work requirements. She was not working because she was the victim of domestic abuse. If she had reported the abuse at the time, she would not have been sanctioned, because domestic violence is "good cause" for not meeting the work requirement. However, she didn't report the abuse and hadn't been receiving benefits for months. We initially tried to convince the Department of Transitional Assistance to issue her a "good cause" waiver retroactively. But as I pressed the DTA to give me more information on her file, we realized that the DTA had made several errors throughout her application process. They never should have sanctioned her in the first place. All of her back benefits were reinstated, but had we not looked into her case, the error might never have been found.

By far, my most memorable client was the defendant in an eviction proceeding. She is a disabled woman who lives alone on a monthly income of around \$1000. Of course, part of what was exciting about working on her case was the level of responsibility that I had: after she was served with a summary process summons and complaint, I drafted the answer and counterclaims and discovery request, and over the next several weeks I negotiated with her landlord's attorney until we could finally come to a settlement that both sides were happy with. In addition to the "nuts and bolts" of her eviction case, I helped her find a mental health service provider she really connected with, where she could begin counseling. I also helped her apply for public housing.

But what was even more rewarding was the relationship that I formed with this client. We spoke almost every day. When I finally closed her case, she sent me a letter: "Thanks again for all your help and encouragement. I probably would have given up if I didn't have your support. You rock and I think you're an awesome lawyer especially after listening to [my landlord] talk trash about you. I had to work hard not to smile. You're stronger

than you look on the surface and I think that will keep everyone off balance and serve you well in the future. I wish you a long and illustrious career.” That she had so much confidence in me and trusted me so much was an honor.

I came to law school with the intention of using my JD to protect people without the resources, education and experience to navigate the legal system. Thanks to EJA’s generosity this summer, I was able to spend ten weeks doing just that, all while building my legal abilities, improving my confidence, and gaining invaluable experience. My internship with CASLS was only ten weeks, but the skills I learned there will last me a lifetime.

Sincerely,

Kate Aizpuru
Harvard

GREATER BOSTON
LEGAL SERVICES
...and justice for all



Cambridge & Somerville Legal Services Office

August 2, 2012

Dan Ruben
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Midlothian, VA 23112

Re: Kate Aizpuru

Dear Dan,

I am thrilled to write this letter summarizing and evaluating Kate Aizpuru's internship at CASLS for the summer of 2012. Kate handled an independent caseload of housing and benefits related cases including, but not limited to, eviction cases, applications for emergency status for public housing, termination of SNAP/Food Stamp benefits and Social Security disability denials. She interviewed clients, performed factual and legal research, drafted pleadings, assisted clients with completing paperwork required to obtain or retain benefits, and negotiated with administrative personnel and opposing counsel.

Kate is a first rate legal advocate. She is exceptionally bright and thorough. Her writing requires little editing and her legal analysis is top rate. She is able to master new areas of law efficiently and handle them effectively. Kate was able to build excellent relationships with her clients. She knew instinctively how to develop rapport with clients and how to make each client feel appreciated and supported. During her time at CASLS Kate had many successes including obtaining retroactive TAFDC benefits to help a tenant at risk of homelessness who had been wrongly sanctioned for failure to do a work requirement to have the financial resources to move, helping a homeless client to be approved for emergency status for public housing, and assisting several others in obtaining or retaining important housing, cash and/or food related benefits.

Kate was conscientious, hard working and a joy to work with. She accepted feedback extremely well and always went the extra mile to provide the highest possible quality of representation to her clients. I would highly recommend her for any future legal job and I would particularly love to see her remain in the world of legal services working to provide equal access to justice for the poor.

Sincerely,

Ellen Shachter
Senior Attorney