

December 28, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I would like to thank you for the opportunity, given in the form of an Equal Justice America Fellowship, to serve and represent underprivileged clients in the greater Boston area this past fall. I spent my fellowship working for Massachusetts Advocates for Children, in Boston, Massachusetts, primarily providing legal services for poor and minority families with autistic children facing barriers to special education services. I also served minority families with children facing school disciplinary matters, and attended school disciplinary hearings on behalf of our clients.

During my fellowship I had the opportunity to assist with the school disciplinary hearing for a client who was facing expulsion from a public school. The client had previously received an Individualized Education Plan, but at the time of the hearing was not receiving special education services. I attended the hearings with my supervisor and assisted in the preparation of each hearing as well as taking notes. With our help our client's expulsion was reduced to suspension, and he was able to return to school, and resume his public education. His parents were unable to afford counsel, and likewise unable to afford a private education for their child. If it had not been for Massachusetts Advocates for Children and our work he would have been denied access to public education and possibly an education at all.

I also had the opportunity to attend and assist with multiple Team meetings for autistic children receiving special education services. These team meetings provided our clients with the advocacy and legal skills needed to receive the most beneficial IEPs for their children. One client, for example, was receiving special education services at a public school; however, his progress at home was deteriorating. His mother requested that home services be included in the IEP. Massachusetts Advocates for children had the child evaluated by two neuropsychologists who recommended he receive at home services; however, at the Team meeting the school district refused. The mother and child are still clients at Massachusetts Advocates for Children and the case is moving forward.

Additionally, I researched issues important to our position for upcoming Team meetings and wrote legal memoranda detailing the most effective stance we could take on behalf of our clients. One issue in particular, whether the personal notebook of an aide constitutes a school record for purposes of providing the most effective special education services for a child, will directly impact the special education services provided to our client. Without parental access to

the notebook for purposes of creating a more beneficial IEP for her child, our client will not receive the best possible individualized plan for his needs.

The opportunity to provide necessary legal services for underprivileged children and their families has been an incredible experience. My fellowship at Massachusetts Advocates for Children this fall has cemented my commitment to work in public interest law, with a focus on children's rights. It is an amazing feeling to know that my work directly and positively influenced the lives of children who otherwise would not receive the special education services they desperately need to succeed in life. Public interest law should be encouraged for lawyers and law students alike. I would like to extend my greatest and most sincere thank you for this opportunity. I am indebted to Equal Justice America and the donors who make this possible.

Sincerely,

Krista Selnau
Suffolk University Law School, Class of 2012