

October 24, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My summer fellowship was done at the East Bay Community Law Center, under the Medical-Legal Partnership with Children's Hospital. Most of the work I did dealt with public benefits, such as SSI and SSDI appeals.

My biggest case this summer had to do with unemployment benefits. Our client had stopped receiving unemployment benefits when she had enrolled in a computer class because it limited the number of hours she could work. However, the class was funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act, and therefore, she should have kept receiving unemployment benefits. I was able to write a brief in support of her case, and represent her before the ALJ. It was a fantastic experience because I was able to see the case all the way through from the beginning to the end, and was able to do all the substantive work on it. It was also a great feeling when we won the case, and our client could return to having some money coming in while continuing her classes and looking for a job.

Another case I worked on this summer was an SSI appeal for a Cambodian immigrant. He has been living in this country for many years but spoke little English, so we had to use a translator every time we met. Using the translator was a little frustrating at times (as we used a translating service over the phone), but in the end we got into a rhythm of using the translator. It was touching to speak to my client and listen to his stories of his time in a work camp under the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. It also was very hard for me to listen to him talk about his symptoms, knowing that he clearly needed SSI but that he had been denied.

Thank you so much for allowing me to have this opportunity to do the great work I did this summer.

Sincerely,
Lea Nehme
UC Berkeley School of Law, Class of 2012.



October 27, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am a Supervising Attorney in the Health Practice of the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) and I had the pleasure of directly supervising Lea Nehme this summer at EBCLC. During her time here Lea was a very effective advocate and demonstrated real dedication to our clients.

The East Bay Community Law Center, now in its 22nd year, provides free legal services for hundreds of low-income residents of Alameda County every year. The Law Center concurrently operates as a clinical program for students of Berkeley Law School. Over the summer, students work full-time under the close supervision of an attorney but have primary responsibility over their cases. During Lea's time at EBCLC, she worked in EBCLC's Medical-Legal Partnership serving low-income families referred by Children's Hospital-Oakland. Lea worked on all aspects of her cases, including making intake calls, interviewing clients, legal research, legal writing, and representing a client before the ALJ. In addition to informal check-ins throughout the day, we had formal weekly meetings in which we discussed the progress of her work and any issues that may have arisen.

Due to the large scope of legal services which we offer to our Medical-Legal Partnership clients, Lea handled a number of complicated cases this summer while she was working at EBCLC, all involving different areas of law, including unemployment insurance and public benefits at the federal, state and county level. I remain impressed by Lea's ability to quickly grasp complex legal issues and identify key facts in her cases. In 10 short weeks, Lea represented a client in a hearing before the Unemployment Insurance Appeals Board, worked on multiple Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applications and appeals, drafted a specialized Power of Attorney, and worked on a domestic violence waiver for a Cal Works/TANF case. She also issue-spotted many other types of legal issues.

Lea's most time-consuming case this summer dealt with unemployment benefits. Our client had been denied unemployment benefits because she had enrolled in a training course and was considered unavailable for work. However, the training course was

federally funded, and therefore, our client should have been eligible. This was a difficult case to make because very little information exists on this type of unemployment appeal and the facts of the case were very complicated. Lea contacted experts on unemployment law for assistance, but they were unfamiliar with this particular type of case and unable to assist besides providing general information. Lea was forced to craft the best legal theory without the benefit of outside guidance. Lea worked tirelessly on this case, interviewing our client several times, researching various issues, and gathering extensive amounts of evidence. She submitted a thorough brief to the ALJ and represented our client at the administrative hearing. Thanks to her valuable advocacy, our client was granted on every aspect of her appeal.

Lea worked on several other cases this summer. Among them was an SSI appeal for a Cambodian immigrant who had toiled in the Khmer Rouge work camps and was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. She interviewed him several times, obtained his medical records, and filed his appeal forms. Lea also drafted a Power of Attorney for a family who was leaving their daughter with a family friend for a period of a few months and wanted the friend to be able to make all decisions regarding their daughter. Lea also worked on a child's SSI case, working with the assigned caseworker and retrieving all the necessary medical records. Lea also began drafting a declaration for a domestic violence waiver for a family on Cal Works.

In all of these cases, Lea was an excellent and sensitive advocate. She was a great asset to our program. We are very grateful for the financial support that you provided for her this summer. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Troya, Supervising Attorney