

Dan Ruben

Executive Director at Equal Justice America

This summer I had the opportunity to intern at The Legal Assistance Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago. This organization provides FREE legal assistance to underserved residents all over the Chicago land area. I was extremely excited to finally get out of the classroom setting and see how the legal field actually works. I got to put some of the hundreds of stereotypes about lawyers and the legal career to rest.

I had the opportunity to work with residents in the community who would normally not be able to receive any legal representation. It was extremely rewarding to help those who truly needed the help. Individual's rights are violated by their employer or their landlord without any type of justice being served; this summer I had the opportunity to help some of these individuals. I sat in on an interview of one of our clients who was suing her landlord for over payment of rent. This lady was a section 8 recipient. According to her voucher, she was required to pay \$100 a month for rent; however, the landlord required her to sign two leases. One of the leases stated she would pay \$450 per month and the other lease stated that she would pay \$100 per month. After paying the landlord \$450 for a number of months, she later received a letter from section 8 stating that she was only required to pay \$100 a month. She continued paying the \$450, fearing that she would lose her apartment if she did not pay him the amount in the lease. She fell behind on payments and the landlord immediately filed to have the tenant evicted even though he was aware that she was paying more than required. The landlord refused to return the tenants money; therefore, the tenant contacted our office. In the end, the landlord decided to settle. It was extremely sad that this landlord was taking money from this lady who was barely making minimum wage. This story was just one example of the type of issues that I had the opportunity to experience this summer.

In working at the agency this summer, I also had the opportunity to learn the downfalls of practicing law and working with clients. I learned that this is a difficult task to do. Often times, I found that the clients would call at the last minute stating that they had an issue. They would go on to explain that they had court in two days, stating that they had all the documents needed. We would do the research, prepare for court, and later find out that the client did not have the documents. The client was lying all along. This is an occurrence that happened often. Yet, attorneys and law students have to remember that for every person you cannot help there are many others who really need the help.

This summer I got to experience the good and bad of working in the legal field. The

experience was very rewarding. I learned a lot and got a chance to draft actual legal documents and talk to real clients. It was extremely heart warming when I got to help a client who would otherwise not be able to afford legal help. Agencies like this are extremely necessary and I am glad that I had the chance to provide a much-needed service to persons who truly need it.

Sincerely,

Leah Robinson

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J.D. expected date: May 2012