

August 12, 2016

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I had the opportunity to work as a legal intern at Advocates for Children of New York (AFC), thanks to the generosity of Equal Justice America. As part of my work there, I had the opportunity to fully immerse myself in the educational advocacy and litigation work that their staff attorneys do on a daily basis. As an intern, I learned how the litigation process plays out in an educational advocacy setting. For example, I had the opportunity to conduct client intake interviews in Spanish in order to understand my clients' needs and past educational history and struggles. All of my clients were low-income families, many of them immigrants, who felt that their children were not getting the education they deserved. It was heart wrenching to see clients whose educational needs were not being met and the difficulties they were having in obtaining a high quality education. My conversations with clients enabled me to develop points of research to develop a broader picture of how AFC could best serve its clients. After interviewing clients, I was often tasked with reaching out to social workers that had aided my clients in the past, their schools, the New York City Department of Education, and other relevant agencies to gather more information in order to start building a case.

Once all the relevant information had been gathered, I had the opportunity to draft multiple impartial hearing requests. These were challenging endeavors that required me to advocate for my clients in the best manner possible while developing sound, concise legal arguments that would be used and developed at hearing. This was often a collaborative process and allowed me to work with various staff members through the editing process, enabling me to develop my writing and advocacy skills.

I also had the opportunity to draft mediation requests and participate in mediation sessions. These were interesting opportunities for me to see various parties come together to try and amicably resolve a pending lawsuit. I was impressed by the collegiality of everyone involved and how they worked towards resolving the issue with the best interest of AFC's clients in mind. Apart from participating in the litigation process, I was also able to conduct substantive legal research on the NYC DOE's obligations to make its elementary schools accessible under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

My time at AFC has taught me the value of having organizations like AFC in order to advocate for those who are left behind, helpless, or who simply need a stronger voice to help them achieve their goals. Furthermore, it has helped me to solidify my career goals and has helped me gain valuable skills to help achieve them. Thanks to EJA's support, I was able to focus on my work this summer and not worry about my financial needs. For this, I will always be grateful. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Brian McGrath

Rutgers Law School, Class of 2018