

To: Dan Ruben, Executive Director, Equal Justice America

From: Ryan Kile

Date: August 24, 2014

Re: Equal Justice America Fellowship, Internship Summary, Summer 2014

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Dear Mr. Ruben:

An Equal Justice America Fellowship helped to fund my summer internship with Legal Services of Northern Virginia, in Arlington Virginia. Without this excellent financial support I could not have provided quality child care for my son during my internship. Obviously, the impact of this fellowship extended to my family, the clients I served over the summer, and my own professional development.

As an LSNV intern, I had the unique opportunity to be assigned to two primary supervising attorneys, working in separate fields, and to assist other staff and managing attorneys with legal research and advocacy issues in still more fields. Most of my time was spent working on family law cases with my main supervisor, but before I discuss that experience I want to highlight for you what I was able to do in other areas.

The staff attorneys throughout LSNV assigned long-term research projects to interns, and I was given two distinct research and writing assignments. First, I researched the causes of action for an elderly disabled condominium owner who will become cut off from his home for several months due to elevator renovations. This case took me through diverse areas of law including the law governing condominiums in Virginia, the Fair Housing Act and Virginia Fair Housing law, and common law claims such as constructive eviction. The memorandum I produced was praised by the office's managing attorney and helped her decide how to handle the case.

My second assignment was to research debtors' exemptions from collection actions under Virginia law. From my research in this area, I produced a checklist for LSNV attorneys to aid them in conducting their client interviews. I was even able to uncover an exemption for college savings that had not previously been considered. This experience was particularly important for my bar exam preparation; since there is no specific course that covers this area of Virginia law, I was able to get a much more detailed understanding of it.

While these research projects consumed a considerable amount of my time, I also spent an enormous amount of time with clients and in court. My main supervisor's family law practice put me in front of clients for the first time in my legal career. I observed his conduct of intakes, interviews, and preparation sessions, and he gave me the opportunity to conduct several client interviews on my own. One of my last solo interviews was with a client whom I will call Mary. Mary and her husband had a physical altercation in an otherwise happy marriage after immigrating to the United States. Their young child had unfortunately become the focal point in

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a culture adjustment gone wrong. The father had lost his temper and crossed the line with our client, and she would not abide physical violence against her even once. She had him arrested, and pursued a protective order. As she came to meet with me for her initial interview, she had begun to wrestle with contradictory feelings. Her son missed his father, and she had never considered separating from him or divorce. After interviewing her, it was clear that it would not be a standard protective order, and that divorce was not a foregone conclusion. My supervisor and I had to explain her options to her, concerning the input she would be allowed to give to the judge concerning the parameters of the protective order. She wanted her husband's alcohol abuse to stop, and for the message to be clear that violence against her would come with legal consequences. She also wanted her husband back in her life and her son's. The protective order hearing was delayed pending her husband's hearing for assault and battery, but the recommendations I provided to her went a long way to giving her peace of mind.

Working with underprivileged clients brings with it many challenges I did not foresee. Many have criminal backgrounds, and more are impoverished. Mary's case is just one that I was able to be a part of where I played a role in making a client's situation more manageable.

My summer internship with LSNV was invaluable in terms of the preparation and observation of trials, dealings with clients, legal research, and interaction with practicing attorneys of which I got to be a part. I was privileged to be involved in the excellent work that legal services attorneys do on behalf of people who have nowhere else to turn.

Sincerely,



Ryan Kile

J.D. candidate, class of 2016

CUA Columbus School of Law