

September 21, 2014

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

Re: Evaluation of Summer 2014 EJA Fellowship

Dear Mr. Ruben,

Thank you very much for your organization's support for my Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF) internship this summer. I was placed in LAF's Children & Families practice group. There, I worked with survivors of domestic violence, as well as with parents and other caregivers involved in Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) investigations.

One of the things I appreciated most about working with a legal aid organization was the ability to form direct relationships with my clients. Getting to know people's stories inspires me in my advocacy work and I am very grateful to LAF and Equal Justice America for giving me the opportunity to work in this setting this past summer.

My summer was filled with many memorable clients. However, one remains in my mind especially vividly. He was a single dad who, in a period of mental and physical hardship, had relied on extended family to help him care for his eight-year-old daughter. After some disagreements, his family decided to petition to have his daughter removed from him. DCFS got involved and the child was placed with his family and eventually even entered the foster care system. This is where LAF came in. We worked with the father and after much preparation and an emotional two-week trial, the court ordered that our client's daughter be returned to him.

Seeing a parent and child ecstatic at finally being reunited was one of the most meaningful moments of my legal career so far. LAF attorneys' zealous and able advocacy for our client and his family was truly inspiring. This is public interest law at its peak: high-quality legal representation combined with respectful and personalized client contact. However, this kind of work is only possible through the generous support of organizations such as Equal Justice America. Thank you.

In large degree due to my summer at LAF, I have since decided to dedicate my career to direct client-advocacy in the public interest. Again, I am incredibly grateful to Equal Justice America for enabling me to confirm and further my desire to be a public interest attorney.

Sincerely,

Sarah Teyssen
Harvard Law School, Class of 2016