

May 12, 2014

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

Re: My 2013-2014 EJA Fellowship Experience

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I have had a terrific experience as a student director for the Temporary Restraining Order Project. In this role, I not only helped keep the organization running from day to day, but I also was in charge of recruiting and training the 50+ volunteers we have per semester. I enjoyed having this leadership position in an organization I had volunteered with the year before. In organizing and running the training sessions, I found it rewarding to train students in how to work with domestic violence victims and prepare them to best help our temporary restraining order applicants. Finally, I also organized a speaker series, which our organization had never had before, and brought in three speakers to talk to the law school and broader Yale community about domestic violence. This helped me get to know other organizations committed to similar issues and start a broader conversation about domestic violence within the New Haven community.

In addition to these administrative tasks, I also worked multiple shifts as a volunteer both semesters. During these shifts, I have encountered many clients with heartbreaking and distressing stories. During my last shift, an applicant came in who had just been attacked two days before and wanted protection for herself, her two children, and her unborn child. She was very frustrated because she had previously applied for a temporary restraining order when her abuser had threatened violence and been denied one. I helped her prepare her application and articulate the reasons for her need for a restraining order in a way that we hoped would be most convincing to the judge. She also had questions about how to challenge joint custody now that violence had transpired and I, after inquiring with the clerks, sent her to another office in the courthouse that could help her with that process. I hope that my presence and aid was helpful to her and helped reduce her unhappiness with the court system. While this was my most recent experience, I have had similar experiences and reflections throughout my time as a volunteer with this project and am grateful that I have been able to be of some help to applicants with the support of Equal Justice America. This type of work has and continues to inspire me to pursue other opportunities that will enable me to help others in the way that I have been able to through the Temporary Restraining Order Project.

Thank you so much for your support,

Selin Akkan  
Yale Law School, Class of 2015