

Dear Mr. Dan Ruban,

This summer I had the pleasure of working at the Greater Boston Legal Services. I moved to Boston exactly one year ago to start law school at Suffolk University Law School. That was my first time coming to Boston and I was not sure what to expect. Suffolk Law School is located in downtown Boston in a very high traffic location and one of the first things you will notice walking into the school is the large population of homeless people lining the street asking for change. Seeing so many people in need of a home was very troublesome to me because having a roof over my head and a bed to sleep in has never been a worry of mine. I consider myself to be extremely lucky and want to use my legal education and career to help people less fortunate than I.

Over the summer my work was geared towards helping people that were homeless get into local shelters. I worked very closely with women that were victims of domestic violence and women suffering from mental illness and/or had children with mental illnesses. A lot of the women were also pregnant at the time they were seeking shelter because their families kicked them out or partner had abandoned them.

We had one client in particular that I worked very closely with all summer. She was 23 years old and her child was 3 years old. We worked very hard to try and find her a shelter that would fit her and her son's needs. Our clients had been in the shelter system since she was a teenager, but has struggled to comply with shelter rules due to her mental illnesses and therefore has been kicked out of many shelters. She had been diagnosed with several behavior disorders as a kid but they were going untreated because she was scared that the state would consider her an unfit parent and her child would be taken away. The behavior issues that she suffered from made it very difficult for her to obey the shelter rules and get along with other shelter residents and staff. This resulted in many fights with other tenants and rule violations.

Her son suffers from sever ADHD which also made it very difficult to be in shelters. There are early curfews for children at the shelters which our client could not comply with because her son would not be able to fall as sleep until two or three in the morning. The child was also very bothersome to other tenants because he was unable to sit still and listen to instructions properly.

Due to the mental illnesses that our client and her son suffered from, they were kicked out of many shelters and were looking at a 24-month ban from the shelter system. I accompanied one of my supervisors to a hearing that would determine whether or not the ban would be up-held. At the hearing we were in a very small office with my supervisor, our client, her son, and the hearing officer. During the hearing my client was asked several questions about her traumatic childhood and the mental illnesses that her and her son suffer from. Throughout the entire meeting our client was unable to get her son to sit still, which ultimately showed the hearing officer how sever the child's ADHD actually was.

The hearing office finally determined that due to our client and her son's mental illnesses they are unable to thrive in a shelter environment. Since the 24-month ban was not applied to our client she was able to apply and successfully get a section-8 voucher that will help her pay for a home for her and her son to live in together.

Being able to help this client was a very memorable experience for me. This client was someone that experienced life the way no 23 year old should ever have too. By helping her and her son they no longer have to be moved around from shelter to shelter. They now have the opportunity to live in their own home and will no longer be punished because of their mental disorders.