

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I could not be happier that I spent my summer at Lawyers' Committee for Better Housing (LCBH). It would have been difficult for me financially to work for a nonprofit without receiving compensation, so I want to stress my gratefulness in receiving the Equal Justice America (EJA) fellowship. While working at LCBH, I learned several different strengths that I look forward to further honing in future areas of work, including working with clients of varying backgrounds, legal writing, collaboration, and policy project work.

The area where I expected to gain experience was in client service, and I was not disappointed. First, once a week for two hours I conducted phone interviews with individuals that had left voicemails with LCBH's Tenants in Foreclosure Hotline. On these phone calls, I gathered facts and determined whether it was necessary for potential clients to come to the office for intake interviews. Conducting phone interviews was a challenge at first because communication for me is more difficult when it is impossible to understand facial cues, interpret body language, or read lips. This was helpful exposure for me, then, because phone communication is something that I will have to do in the future regardless of where I end up working. Learning how common it is for tenants to be cheated out of relocation assistance, which in Chicago is \$10,500 for eligible tenants, was disturbing. Often these tenants were living in standards that violated warranties of habitability and posed severe health risks to them. Having the opportunity not only to help them in their present situation but also to provide them with tools to work with in the future should they find themselves in a similar situation was immensely gratifying.

The second way in which I worked directly with clients was by conducting intake interviews. Every week from 9:00 am until noon or one pm, I interviewed potential clients that had come to LCBH with problems ranging from conditions issues to evictions to problematic landlord behavior. A strength that I developed from conducting intake interviews was learning how to gather the sort of information that will be needed when legally assessing the issue at hand without cutting a person off or preventing them from saying that which they wished to say. This required control at times, along with gentle redirection where necessary, but was helpful in reminding me that everyone has a story to tell, and although I am seeking certain information, it is important to still play the role of an active and respectful listener.

Finally, I had two opportunities to co-lead a client meeting in which my advisor and I reviewed draft complaints and also asked questions to fill gaps in the factual background. This was a different sort of client contact in that it also involved explaining the legal process to them,

including the pros and cons of filing versus trying to negotiate an agreement prior to filing, along with laying out the timeline of a case moving through court. This was one of the most moving experiences that I had this summer. This woman had experienced serious adversity after having been illegally locked out of her home pursuant to the foreclosure of her landlord's building. Her landlord trashed her belongings and forced her and her children to leave the apartment immediately, rendering them homeless. The police did not help our client remedy the lockout. When she came to LCBH, she wanted to bring a suit against her former landlord. She had no idea that she had been cheated out of receiving the relocation assistance in the amount of \$10,500 as a tenant of a foreclosed building in Chicago. Her surprise was significant, and the hope that she had going forward was powerful. Seeing the justice system finally work for this woman was something that I will never forget, and it was inspiring to be able to use a unique set of skills to make her life better.

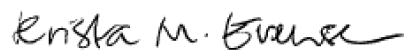
Working at LCBH reminded me of my passion for working with people and using my expertise to aid individuals going through difficult times in their lives. During coursework, it is easy to forget what the end product of a degree will look like. This summer, I remembered how rewarding it is to do nonprofit work.

In addition to working with clients, I had the unique opportunity to research and write as well, something that is not always a possibility as a summer extern in a nonprofit. I wrote several demand letters and cease and desist letters, a motion for summary judgment, and two complaints. Working with LCBH not only gave me substantial practice in working with clients and supervisors, and I learned a substantial amount about my own work style, how I work with others, and how I operate when adapting to a new practice area. These are all experiences that will be very helpful in adapting to a learning curve during a new job in the future.

I am thankful to have worked for LCBH and would like to again emphasize that it would not have been as feasible without having received funds from EJA. Thank you again so much for the opportunity, and I am proud to be affiliated with such a commendable organization.

Sincerely,

Krista Evensen



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Class of 2019*