

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Dan Ruben,

My summer experience at the University of Michigan Law School Unemployment Insurance Clinic was exceptionally meaningful. As a student who has seen the unemployment insurance program in another state (the state of Arizona, precisely) in action (prior to law school), I found the work to not only be morally meaningful but also intellectually stimulating.

My work was broad. Steve Gray, the managing attorney who runs the program, gave me an assortment of responsibilities. Among these responsibilities was client intake, general client interaction and communication, communication between the clinic the administrative law courts (and the unemployment agency), client preparation, and actually arguing the hearings. Steve was always around as a resource, but I got to do almost every aspect of arguing the case.

Part of what made the summer program so rewarding was the fact that as I worked with the clients and got acquainted with their cases, I was noticing things that were going on in the real world that were possibly going to impact my clients in a positive way in the future. For example, there was a legislative issue regarding robofraud that our clinic team was sent to the capitol to learn about. This legislation, if passed, would have the positive effect of not dubbing many unemployed workers as fraudulent for merely failing to check a misleading box regarding their information when they submitted a claim.

One of the difficult things I had to learn from during the summer is dealing with client truthfulness. Before I started the program, I never even thought that I would ever have an issue with a client lying about something. It seemed like something that would only happen in marginal cases. During the middle of the summer, I was at a hearing in which my client told the truth for the first time while I was doing the direct examination. I was very taken aback when this happened. Luckily, I was able to still win the case because I objected to everything the agency said and the judge sustained my objections. The objections were to the fact that the agency kept citing business records that did not meet the legal criteria that are required to categorize something as a business record. The agency was trying to use these documents as an attempt to evade hearsay rules, and I was able to successfully object. After the hearing, I went to Steve and asked him to teach me an approach about successfully talking to clients. It was a profound learning experience. Steve taught me both behavioral and verbal approaches that made it a lot easier for me to do my job.

Last, I really enjoyed working with the other students. It was a very community-oriented environment that leaked into other social aspects of my life. Having a good group of people to work with while doing a meaningful job, I think, is the prime

reason that many people go into public service, and I hope to be able to have another similar opportunity in the future.

Thank you so much for affording me the opportunity to benefit from this scholarship. I couldn't have done it without your help.

Sincerely,

Alisa V. Sherbow
University of Michigan