

August 29, 2017

Dear Mr. Dan Ruben,

I had a great experience this summer working at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Charlottesville, Virginia in the JustChildren Program. It was a quite a busy summer, so I got to work on many different kinds of cases and with many different clients. Each case taught me something different, and I enjoyed the variety of work I was able to complete.

I worked with a client who was in a juvenile detention center. He wrote a letter to JustChildren, asking for help and representation in his upcoming Serious Offender Review hearing. A juvenile in Virginia who has been convicted as a serious offender is entitled to a review hearing after his first two years in detention, and every year afterward until he is released, or turns twenty-one and is transferred to the Department of Corrections. At this hearing, the judge can reduce the juvenile's sentence based on a number of factors. As the first step in the process, we had to determine if we would be able to take the case of the juvenile who wrote to us. At the age of fourteen, he was convicted as an adult of attempted murder and conspiracy. The story behind his case was confusing. All of his records indicated that he was a quiet kid who was shy, but respectful of authority. There was also mention of premeditation and text messages between himself and a co-defendant in the police reports. All I could initially tell about what happened was that his co-defendant was the son of the victims, and that the two had previously been arrested for robbing the co-defendant's parents.

On this case, I learned how to investigate. I spoke to the juvenile's mother to learn more about what happened and more about his personality and background. I requested more records from the Department of Juvenile Justice. I looked up his attorney and requested records from him. After a few weeks of tracking things down, I was able to piece together more of what happened that night. I also went to visit the juvenile at the detention center. I spoke to him about what an SOR hearing is and what he can expect, as well as things he can do now to put his best foot forward with the judge. Because I had done research and knew he was quiet, I also brought a list of questions he could answer in writing at a later date. After speaking with him, I knew this was the right call. Although I had to leave the case at the end of the summer, my research helped sway JustChildren into taking on the juvenile as a client.

I also got to work on a memorandum in support of a conditional pardon. I used the research and investigatory skills I learned on the previous case to figure out all the pertinent facts and circumstances I needed to write a complete memo. I gathered documents from the Department of Juvenile Justice, our client's previous attorney, and the criminal court. I spoke to people in his community to gather letters of support. I also spoke to our client on the phone to gather more information, as he was incarcerated at Department of Corrections.

On this project, I was able to apply the legal writing skills I learned as a 1L on a real case. I took all the documents and information I had, and used them to create an argument in the

memo. I argued that our client did not get a fair shake in the justice system, that he had done extremely well in the juvenile justice system, and that there was no threat to the community were he to be released. I also got to pull in developmental research I had learned in a class from second semester on mental health issues in juvenile justice, to show that juveniles are not as culpable for their actions as adults, and that the reasons for continued incarceration are less relevant to a juvenile offender than an adult one. Overall, it was a great opportunity for me to put my legal writing skills to work, and I learned a lot about persuasive legal writing in a real world scenario.

Thanks to the grant I received from Equal Justice America, I was able to work in public service and hone my abilities as a budding attorney. I had a great experience at JustChildren this summer, and learned many skills that I will take with me as I move forward in my legal careers.

Sincerely,

*Christina Taylor*

Christina Taylor  
University of Virginia School of Law  
Class of 2019

August 31, 2017  
Dan Ruben, Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
Emailed to [katie@equaljusticeamerica.org](mailto:katie@equaljusticeamerica.org)

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I write in regard to Christina Taylor's summer fellowship with Legal Aid Justice Center. Christina worked in our JustChildren program primarily, but she also gained exposure to other areas of law that affect clients in poverty.

As a summer intern with JustChildren, Christina assisted JustChildren attorneys in providing civil legal representation to low-income children and their families to help them solve problems with services provided by the education, foster care, Medicaid, and juvenile justice systems. Specifically, Christina assisted with the following tasks and cases this summer:

- Staffing the JustChildren intake line and providing advice to callers;
- Interviewing clients in the juvenile justice system who presented with legal questions, requesting and reviewing their records, and making a recommendation regarding their cases;
- Interviewing a client who was expelled from school to determine his eligibility for appeal and re-entry;
- Collaborating with her co-intern on drafting a conditional pardon for a convicted fourteen-year-old including investigation and legal research; and
- Researching various issues related to the transportation of juveniles in mental health crisis.

Please feel free to contact me at 434-529-1833 or [amyw@justice4all.org](mailto:amyw@justice4all.org) if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

/s/ Amy Walters