

To: Katie

From: Bridget Flynn

Date: October 4, 2018

Re: Equal Justice America Summer 2018 Fellowship Work

To whom it may concern:

My summer working as an Equal Justice America Fellow was an amazing experience. I interned at Center for Disability & Elder Law. In that position, I got to see how a dedicated nonprofit legal organization serves the indigent and disabled of its community. I attained a variety of legal experience, and I became increasingly passionate about legally serving the indigent.

On multiple occasions I was able to use my newly acquired 711 license (the Illinois license for law students who have completed at least half of their legal education). Appearing at the Cook County Courthouse was a valuable experience for its confidence building and for the insight I gained into how to communicate with judges.

As I participated in weekly case meetings, I also got to see how CDEL's legal team makes difficult decisions regarding whether and how it can help candidates.

I had direct contact with CDEL's candidates when I worked weekly screening shifts. I screened a total of 65 candidates. In those interviews, I efficiently gathered relevant information about the candidates' legal issues, including the dates, names and other relevant data. I was able to use my interviewing skills from my newspaper reporter experience to make sure I had really listened to the candidates. On the advice of my supervisors, I [tried] to make sure that in every interview I asked specifically what kind of legal result the candidate was seeking, instead of assuming I knew what the candidates wanted. These interviews sharpened my communication skills and instilled in me a sense of how badly needed legal services are among the indigent.

At a guardianship help desk at the state court building, I also helped 21 clients petition state court for guardianship over other adults who were no longer able to make sound decisions for themselves. While staffing this desk, I helped only petitioners who had not hired lawyers for these petitions. They were filing petitions in the hopes that the state would make them guardians so they could protect their loved ones' best interests. My help saved the petitioners money on lawyers' fees.

I helped five clients at workshops complete Power of Attorney documents, which designate friends or family members to make financial or healthcare decisions for the clients if the clients lose their capacity to make such decisions. I also helped those clients complete Living Will Declarations, which state their critical and sensitive wishes concerning the ends of their lives.

I drafted a will and a trust agreement for an artistic, elderly client to protect his creative work from theft and to ensure that his assets were given to his daughter. Such documents can be crucial for the prevention of elder financial abuse.

One success story stands out to me. I helped an 86-year-old woman get a case against her dismissed so she did not have to pay a surprise bill of \$7,000. Someone destroyed her motor vehicle in 2015. She had a primary insurance policy and GAP insurance. Documents were sent to the client's GAP insurance company. For many months, the client was receiving statements from her auto dealer indicating that she owed no balance, so she thought that her GAP insurance had paid the balance. Then she received a statement from the auto dealer with a \$7,000 balance. Her auto dealer and her GAP insurance company were stonewalling her. The auto dealer filed a lawsuit against her for the balance of \$7,000. I drafted a hardship letter to opposing counsel explaining that the client lived on a very fixed income and that the client had no assets to collect. The auto dealer dismissed the case, and the client was very grateful for the help.

In addition, CDEL staff were fantastic to work with. I learned a great deal from them and very much enjoyed them as co-workers. I hope to assist at one of their upcoming fundraisers.

Thank you, Equal Justice America, for helping me to have this very fulfilling and educational experience!

Sincerely,

Bridget I. Flynn
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