

August 16, 2018

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
Building II – Suite 204  
13540 East Boundary Road  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

With the assistance of Equal Justice America, I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work as a summer legal intern in the Aging and Disabilities Unit of Community Legal Services of Philadelphia (CLS). In this position, I completed a large variety of work, including performing client intake, composing a nursing home complaint submitted to the Department of Health, communicating daily with the Social Security Administration to coordinate clients' benefits, and researching and writing memos on the practice of nursing home involuntary discharges. I would like to share with you two of my experiences as a snapshot into my work this summer. I have used only first initials to protect client privacy.

One of my clients, Ms. B came into CLS with a Social Security notice indicating suspension of benefits as well as a large overpayment for previous months. The reason listed for the suspension and overpayment was that Ms. B was over the resource limit for SSI benefits. After looking into Ms. B's resources, it was clear that Social Security was incorrectly counting her monthly SSI check as a resource, rather than as income, in the month received. Monthly SSI checks should be counted as income in the month received and only become a resource in the next month. Through communication with Social Security, I was able to alert Social Security to this error. Social Security issued a new notice correcting their error and recalculating the overpayment amount correctly. Social Security required further proof that Ms. B was currently under the resource limit before re-instating her benefits. I worked with Ms. B to compile that information. Although I left before Ms. B was able to find all of the documentation that Social Security requested, I am confident that as soon as she provides the necessary documents, her SSI benefits will be re-instated. This case showed me the importance of having legal representation to help coordinate Social Security benefits. Many SSI recipients might not be aware of the technicalities of income and resource allowances. I really enjoyed learning the Social Security rules and then, advocating on clients' behalf with Social Security representatives to ensure that clients received the benefits that they were entitled to.

In addition to working with clients, I also conducted research into the practice of involuntary discharges from nursing homes. The problem of involuntary discharges is severe and growing; discharge and evictions from nursing homes are the top-reported grievance to long-term care state ombudsman programs. Over the summer I researched the legality of nursing home discharges to homeless shelters, motels, and boarding homes. I was given this assignment because attorneys at CLS were seeing an increasing trend of clients evicted from a nursing home into a local homeless shelter. Pennsylvania law mandates that long-term care facility involuntary discharges must be to an "appropriate" location capable of "meeting the resident's needs." For many reasons, including accessibility, lack of medical staff and resources, admission procedures, and the temporary nature of placement, homeless shelters are not appropriate and cannot meet residents' needs. My memo provided the strongest argument as to why homeless shelters, motels, and boarding homes fail to

meet this legal standard and are profoundly inappropriate discharge locations. CLS will be able to use this memo when representing clients who are being discharged to shelters and in larger policy advocacy to stop this practice.

CLS is truly a wonderful organization that advocates for its clients across a wide variety of legal issues on both the individual and policy level. I witnessed firsthand CLS's commitment to providing equal access to justice for every client. My summer experience was formative and I am very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to CLS's important work. Thank you for your assistance in making this experience possible.

Sincerely,

Caroline Ramsey  
University of Virginia School of Law  
J.D. expected, May 2020



August 28, 2018

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road, Building II, Suite 204  
Midlothian, VA 23112

Dear Mr. Ruben,

I am an attorney in the Aging and Disabilities Unit at Community Legal Services (CLS) in Philadelphia, and I had the pleasure of supervising Caroline Ramsey's work during her internship this summer.

The Aging and Disabilities Unit represents adults aged 60 and older, as well as younger individuals with disabilities, in legal matters connected to public benefits, long term services and supports (LTSS) and guardianship. With supervision, Caroline provided representation to more than a dozen clients in cases involving the income and health care coverage that they need to meet their basic needs and remain independent in their homes.

Caroline worked on numerous Supplemental Security Income (SSI) cases, including several which were quite complicated. Caroline interviewed the clients and third parties, pored through clients' documents, researched legal issues connected to eligibility and proactively identified potential issues. She also communicated and negotiated with staff in Social Security and welfare department offices on behalf of our clients. She demonstrated good interviewing skills and empathy in her interactions with our clients, and she quickly learned how to be effective and persistent with benefits agency staff.

Caroline also obtained a hardship waiver of Medicaid estate recovery for a disabled man who had always lived with his late mother, whose receipt of Medicaid-funded LTSS gave rise to the estate recovery claim. As a result, the client can keep and continue to live in the house he inherited from his mother.

In addition to her individual case work, Caroline wrote two research memoranda on nursing home involuntary discharge issues which will be very helpful to both our representation of individual clients and our policy advocacy. Caroline's research, analytical and writing skills are all excellent, and this was reflected in the quality of her memos.



Caroline also wrote a lengthy complaint to the nursing facility licensing agency on behalf of a woman who was dumped in the hospital by her nursing home, which illegally refused to readmit her.

It was a pleasure having Caroline interning with us this summer. We enjoyed having her here and were extremely pleased by her fine work. We very much appreciate Equal Justice America's providing funding to make her internship possible. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (215) 227-4798 or [pwalz@clsphila.org](mailto:pwalz@clsphila.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Pamela Walz'.

Pamela Walz  
Supervising Attorney