

Sophia Temis – EJA Fellowship; hosted at the New York Legal Assistance Group

This summer I was exposed to the many different facets of law. Under the supervision of three incredible attorneys, I was able to work on a variety of legal issues. I had the opportunity to work on immigration, housing, family law, Social Security disability, Veterans Administration, Medicaid and pooled trust cases. While I came into this internship having my heart set on healthcare law, I quickly learned I was interested in other areas of the law as well. It was eye opening to see how each of these areas of law can indirectly affect a person's health.

Over the summer, I was able to attend different clinics with each of my supervisors. Each clinic served a bit of a different patient population: cancer patients, elderly people, veterans and specifically veterans who experienced military sexual trauma. Additionally, my duties included conducting intake and scheduling clients for the Veteran's clinics. With every intake I conducted, I felt I was making an impact by connecting a veteran in need with either an appointment with one of our attorney's or with a referral to someone else who could help them. I also worked on a memo that compared the VA notice requirements with a notice letter sent to one of our clients alerting them of a proposed adverse action. My analysis showed an issue in compliance with the notice requirements.

Overall, some days were really hard. Through client interactions, I was exposed to heart-wrenching stories that are often hard to hear. It was difficult to hear grown men cry because they are sick and have no money to pay for next month's rent or strong women tell their painful story about being taken advantage of while serving in the military. It was also extremely hard to do home visits and see the horrible living circumstances that some elderly people have to endure.

Ultimately, the light at the end of the tunnel is the feeling that each client is getting the help they truly need. Many of the clients I spoke to found comfort in being heard. It brought them peace of mind to have someone else handle their troubling legal issues such as an eviction. In turn this helps to ameliorate and prevent healthcare risks that they would otherwise be exposed to if they were left homeless.

I appreciate the attorneys in the LegalHealth unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group for taking a chance on me and teaching me so much over the course of the summer. I don't think I would have had such a diverse and all-encompassing legal experience anywhere else.

October 29, 2018

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My name is Samantha Kubek and I'm a staff attorney at the New York Legal Assistance Group's LegalHealth division. This summer, I had the privilege to supervise Sophia Temis during her Equal Justice America fellowship. LegalHealth partners with New York City hospitals to provide legal representation and services to patients. Sophia was supervised by myself and two other attorneys, and was able to join us at our clinics at three of our partner hospitals. At these clinics, she observed client intakes and interviews in both the outpatient and inpatient settings

Over the course of the summer, Sophia completed a tremendous amount of work for us. Much of our work requires reviewing our clients' medical records in order to determine whether we can provide representation on matters including social security benefits, immigration, and veterans benefits. Sophia was able to handle these records reviews, providing us with valuable insight into our clients' cases and the viability of filing for various benefits. She completed over sixty intake calls for LegalHealth's Veterans Initiative, scheduling clients for appointments and referring them to outside organizations when their matters exceeded the scope of our office. She assisted with assisting our clients' in setting up pooled trusts, and in fact became so knowledgeable on the subject that some of our attorneys came to her for assistance.

As a native Russian speaker, Sophia was able to assist in serving as a translator for some of our Russian-speaking clients, which was particularly helpful to her supervisor who staffs a clinic out in Coney Island, where many of the clients only speak Russian. Additionally, Sophia conducted incredibly thorough research into a matter regarding insufficient notice provided to a client by the Department of Veterans Affairs, which has resulted in an ongoing investigation by our office's Special Litigation Unit to determine whether the VA has violated veterans' constitutional rights.

Sophia is earnest and eager to learn. Throughout the course of her summer, she demonstrated a desire to grow as an attorney, and further develop her legal skills. She was always eager to take on new tasks, learn new skills, and help the clients in any way possible. We at LegalHealth were so thrilled with the work she did that we offered to keep her on as a legal intern this fall, which she has accepted.

I am happy to discuss Sophia's experience with LegalHealth and can be reached at the number or email below. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,



Samantha Kubek, Esq.

Staff Attorney

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