

Meghan Brooks, Former Student Director
Temporary Restraining Order Project, Yale Law School

September 10, 2018

Dan Ruben, Executive Director
Equal Justice America

Dear Mr. Ruben,

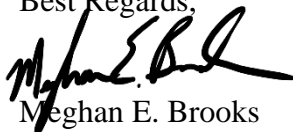
I am writing to thank Equal Justice America for its enduring support of the Yale Temporary Restraining Order Project and the applicants we serve. Equal Justice America's support ensured that I could take on the Student Director role within the Temporary Restraining Order Project rather than take on another paying job as a law student. I deeply appreciate your support, and believe that the family violence attorneys at New Haven Legal Assistance and the court clerks in the New Haven Superior Courthouse – and most importantly, our applicants – do, too.

Student Directors with the Yale Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) Project run a decades-old endeavor to connect Yale law students – particularly those in their first year – with members of the New Haven community and the local legal profession. Student volunteers assist people experiencing family and other intimate violence as they apply for temporary restraining orders. As a student director, and working under the supervision of family law attorneys with New Haven Legal Assistance, I helped train law student volunteers in the minutiae of the forms and filing process, and taught them how to listen to an applicant's story to help the applicant organize events into a chronology and help explain to the judge why a temporary restraining order is so necessary. As a visit to our office may also be the first time an applicant has described their experiences to another person, I also helped train volunteers in making appropriate referrals.

I have already shared this story, but it remains one of the most affecting experiences I had as a Student Director. A young woman who came into our office shortly after her boyfriend had taken their infant daughter and disappeared without a word for almost two days. As we talked through her story, it became clear that her boyfriend had subjected her to physical, emotional, and sexual violence for years, and had recently begun to track her cell phone. It also became clear that she had never told her story to anyone in a position to help before. We answered her questions about the TRO application and service process, worked through the chronology of her boyfriend's abuse for the affidavit, and filed for a TRO to protect both her and her daughter. She left with the contact information for a domestic violence umbrella services organization, and a plan to stay with a friend until the order was in place.

Hers is just one story, but the TRO Project assists applicants like her every day. Being a Student Director allowed me not only to assist applicants directly every week, but to guide law student volunteers through what are likely among their first experiences helping clients who have experienced trauma seek justice. I am grateful to Equal Justice America for the opportunity to do so.

Best Regards,



Meghan E. Brooks
Yale Law School 2019