

August 31, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I had the opportunity to intern with East Bay Community Law Center's Health Practice. The East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) in Berkeley, California, is a non-profit organization that provides free legal services to low-income residents of Alameda County.

At EBCLC, I was responsible for hearing cases, conducting intake interviews, and providing brief legal services around health insurance appeals, disability benefits, public benefits, and habitable housing needs. I also participated in the Health Practice's weekly case rounds wherein interns and supervising attorneys met to discuss new intakes and identify potential legal remedies for each.

Of the many rich experiences I had at this internship, the two that I particularly valued were the hearing preparation experience and the direct client interaction. With regards to the former, I was assigned to serve as the main legal advocate for two social security disability benefits cases. The first case involved a middle-aged man struggling with severe depression, and the second featured a formerly homeless client who had lived under the freeway for ten years. For each hearing case, I wrote the brief, met with my clients, and prepared evidence. I also drafted direct and cross examination questions where necessary. The final decisions are still pending for these cases, but I am hopeful that both will ultimately result in favorable outcomes.

In addition to these two hearing cases, I provided brief direct legal services to approximately ten other clients. These shorter cases covered a wide spectrum of legal issues. Some clients had questions about health insurance denial appeals, others had habitable housing concerns, and yet others needed help with income benefits. In turn, I successfully helped one client appeal a delayed Covered California application. I also wrote letters to landlords for a few clients dealing with mold in their apartments. Many of my clients were HIV-positive and of ailing health, and I helped them file disability benefit applications.

All of my clients were living near the federal poverty level, and it was rewarding to use my legal education to help them obtain much-needed resources. Regardless of the legal issue, I tremendously enjoyed working with my clients and advocating on their behalf. I am deeply grateful for the funding that I received through Equal Justice America; without it, it might not have been possible for me to do the public service work that I accomplished this summer.

Thank you so much for your support—and for making it possible for law students like myself to work for the neediest in our communities.

Sincerely,
Charlotte Tsui
J.D. Candidate 2016
American University, Washington College of Law