

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

August 20, 2008

Dear Mr. Ruben:

As a legal intern this summer with the Juvenile Rights Practice of the Legal Aid Society of New York, I had the opportunity to assist attorneys with all aspects of representing children in delinquency and child protective proceedings. Through interviewing our clients, conducting visits to their homes, referring them to appropriate services, drafting motions on their behalf, and talking with their family members, I witnessed the significant impact that good legal representation can have on the lives of our young clients. Equal Justice America enabled me to contribute to the positive impact that the Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Practice has on its clients and to discover my passion for providing legal services to young people.

One of the most satisfying and invigorating parts of my internship was interviewing our clients and preparing them for their court appearances. Often, I was the first person to contact them and explain what was going to happen. I listened to their stories and learned about their lives and the choices, both good and bad, that they had made. Many clients asked if I would be in the courtroom with them, and I always reassured them that I would be sitting right behind them. Even when my clients did not ask me, I sat in during their appearances and hearings. Once I met a client, I became invested in him or her and viewed my presence as part of my advocacy. I very much valued the relationships that I was able to build with our clients through interviewing them, calling to check in on their progress, and talking again on subsequent court dates.

During the second week of my internship, I went to visit a twenty-year-old client with severe developmental disabilities who was about to age out of foster care; her foster care agency was behind in planning for her next living arrangement. Being able to visit her in her foster home was crucial to our successful legal advocacy on her behalf. Because she was in an environment where she felt comfortable talking honestly and freely, she told us what she wanted to happen once she turned twenty-one. We were then able to negotiate with her caseworker and her foster care agency to create a plan acceptable to her. I felt honored to make her voice heard and ensure that her future plans accorded with her desires.

Amidst the constant cycling between emotional highs and lows in the courtrooms, I found success in small victories: discovering that a reticent client will talk enthusiastically about dancing, learning that a mother no longer wanted to continue a case against her daughter,

connecting a client with a program that provides counseling. These triumphs fueled me when our clients' circumstances were challenging or when I bore the brunt of people's frustrations with the court system. Together, the successes and challenges of my work this summer fueled my desire to continue working on behalf of children and youth.

I want to thank you and Equal Justice America for making possible my internship this summer with the Juvenile Rights Practice of the Legal Aid Society of New York. My experiences there -- serving clients on a daily basis, supporting children and families, and assisting in the legal representation of some of society's most vulnerable members -- reminded me why I chose to go to law school and confirmed my commitment to practicing public interest law upon graduation. The support I received from Equal Justice America enabled me to spend my summer with the Legal Aid Society, and I will be forever grateful.

Sincerely yours,

Emily Blumberg

Harvard Law School
Class of 2010