

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

August 31, 2011

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I had a wonderful summer at The Alliance for Children's Rights in Los Angeles! I worked on their Special Education program, assisting children in foster care, and those who have been adopted out of foster care, with meeting their educational needs. It was a really great feeling to know I was working on individual cases that would hopefully help to ensure that these children received the education to which they were entitled. I received a comprehensive view of what goes into special education advocacy, from the day-to-day activities of requesting school records and following up with the child's social worker, to conducting research to further the organization's efforts regarding the school-to-prison pipeline and due process appeals. Also, I had the opportunity to attend juvenile court hearings and Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings with the attorneys.

I was fortunate enough to meet some of the children whose cases I worked on over the summer. For example, one girl had run away from her group home, was placed in a foster home, ran away again and was placed in another group home, all in the course of two or three months. Part of my job was to keep track of where she was and ensure that all her records followed her from placement to placement. My work became all the more real to me once I was able to meet her at a juvenile court hearing, because it helped me to understand what other obstacles she was dealing with besides her special education needs.

To see clients released from juvenile detention, or receiving services that are actually targeted towards addressing their needs at their IEP meetings, was a satisfying feeling and the culmination of all the work I had done for so many weeks. I learned a lot about myself and what skills I need to develop in order to become a more effective advocate, but I also learned what kinds of skills I already possess and how to build from there.

The entire staff at The Alliance was incredibly friendly and knowledgeable, helping to ease the transition to a new environment. Though I was assigned to a specific program of my choosing, there were opportunities to explore other programs during the summer as well. For example, all the interns had a chance to help with an adoption case and went on the record at court when the adoption was finalized. I cannot imagine a better group of people to spend my summer with—the staff provided a great learning experience as well as an inspiring example of commitment to public interest work.

Thank you very much to Equal Justice America for providing me with the opportunity to engage in public interest work without having to worry about the cost involved. Such a gift was an incredible help to me, and I was able to focus on the tasks at hand rather than dwelling on the

financial constraints. The fellowship played an important role in making my summer internship such an enriching experience. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Erica Carroll  
JD/MSW Candidate  
UCLA School of Law, 2014



## **The Alliance for Children's Rights**

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September 20, 2011

Jill C. Rowland, Esq.  
Special Education Program Director  
The Alliance for Children's Rights  
3333 Wilshire Blvd., Ste 550  
Los Angeles, CA 90010

Re: Erica Carroll, Legal Reference

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this reference letter regarding Erica Carroll. The Alliance for Children's Rights had the pleasure of hosting Ms. Carroll for a ten week, Equal Justice America Legal Fellowship during the summer of 2011.

The Alliance for Children's Rights is a non profit legal organization which serves the needs of children in out-of-home care, primarily foster children, within the Los Angeles County Dependency system. We finalize adoptions and legal guardianships as well as provide special education, health care and benefits advocacy. We also provide services for youth transitioning out of this system into adulthood. We provide low income families with resources needed to ensure that children in their care are provided with safe and nurturing homes.

As one of our most valued legal interns, Ms. Carroll demonstrated the commitment, compassion, and legal skill required to serve the diverse needs of our clients. Although Erica was assigned to the Special Education Program, she was also required to work assisting clients on our intake line. While fielding these calls, she utilized her legal issue spotting skills, ferreting out the legal issues which were often hidden within a client's story. She then interviewed the client to complete comprehensive program specific questionnaires to ensure that our individual programs had the information necessary to determine whether we could accept these callers as clients. She always completed this process in an empathetic manner while speaking with callers who were often in crisis. She integrated her innate compassion with her excellent legal skills to provide excellent direct client communication. Erica's professionalism, legal skills and compassion clearly make her client contact skills highly desirable for any future legal position.

As an intern solely dedicated to the Special Education Project, Ms. Carroll displayed excellent talents as a persuasive advocate, legal researcher and writer, and also brought important skills including efficient, organization and determination. All of these skills served our clients well during the summer Ms. Carroll spent with us.

Ms. Carroll was required to manage a case load of approximately twenty (20) cases, retaining sole responsibility for their processing and advocacy. This included communicating with the client and other persons relevant to their case such as their appointed attorneys in dependency or

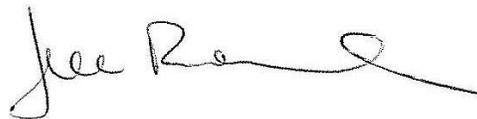
delinquency court and their social workers or probation officers to keep such personnel up to date on the needs of the child as well as our need for information from them. Ms. Carroll was also required to advocate for the timely request and receipt of educational records from local educational agencies, most often school districts. Of note, Ms. Carroll was able to constantly monitor the legal timelines as well as forcefully advocate ensuring compliance with the law.

Once educational records are received, Ms. Carroll was required to organize these extensive and complicated records and to review them. Such review required a degree of sophistication in understanding statistics, psychology, various disabilities, as well as legal issue spotting within the very complicated field of special education law. Ms. Carroll did well and successfully completed an extensive file review, demonstrating a well developed knowledge of disabilities and the ability to interpret complicated psychological evaluations. Then, under my direct supervision, we determined a plan for the future advocacy of the child's case including requesting an independent speech and language evaluation and advocating for increased speech and language services. Ms. Carroll was a quick learner of these complicated systems, of the law, and of the needs of our disabled children.

Ms. Carroll also completed a research project regarding the protections afforded to special education children against suspension and expulsion. She conducted exhaustive research and composed a well written and organized memorandum on the subject. This project has already contributed to the legal knowledge in our program and will continue to assist us in providing advocacy to many children in the future. Finally, Ms. Carroll's dedication to our clients and our organization made her one of the most outstanding interns we have ever had the pleasure of hosting. She volunteered to working with us for an additional three weeks following the conclusion of our normal ten week summer program.

Please feel free to contact me at any time to further discuss the attributes of Ms. Erica Carroll. I would highly recommend her for any future position or endeavor. Her dedication to serving the underrepresented in our society, combined with her empathetic manner of addressing client needs and her excellent legal and organization skills would make her an outstanding contributor to any organization. It is with sadness that we must relinquish her to her future legal career and we wish her luck in her future endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jill Rowland". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jill C. Rowland, Esq.  
Special Education Program Director