

# JILLIAN LEE BURSTEIN

August 24, 2011

Mr. Dan Ruben  
Executive Director Equal Justice America  
13540 East Boundary Road, Building II – Suite 204  
Midlothian, Virginia 23112

RE: EJA Summer Fellowship Experience at Equip for Equality

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer, I had the opportunity to work full time as a law clerk in Equip for Equality's Special Education Legal Clinic. Equip for Equality (EFE) provides free legal assistance to children with special needs and seeks to advocate on their behalf to ensure that they are receiving the appropriate supports and services in school. Special Education is a passion of mine, and having the opportunity to provide clients with direct legal services was an incredible experience I am extremely grateful for.

My experience at EFE entailed interviewing clients, collaborating with the office's attorneys to assess cases, providing clients extended advocacy assistance, ghost-writing demand letters, demands for due process, representing clients at negotiations, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings, and at administrative hearings.

The most memorable part of my experience at Equip for Equality this summer was when the firm's managing partner allowed me to represent a client at a residency hearing. One day, I was assigned a call that came in on the EFE Special Education Helpline. The Helpline is a resource for parents to call when they have an issue with their school and need assistance. On this particular day, the parent who called explained that she had received a letter from her son's school explaining that it had been determined that she and her son were non-residents of the school district and therefore her son could no longer attend school on a tuition-free basis. Her son was a little over three and a half years old and had a diagnosis of Autism. He had been receiving Early Intervention Special Education Services through the school's Early Childhood program that school year, and was eligible to receive the services throughout the summer; however, since the school had determined that he was not a resident of the district, the child was unable to continue attending school.

Typically, residency issues are not within EFE's priorities; however, in this case, EFE made an exception. I urged the team to investigate this case further and the team ultimately decided to allow me to represent the client at hearing. I feel honored that the management so supported me in my efforts to advocate on behalf of this client. Preparing for hearing was exhilarating, and the encouragement I received from my colleagues was remarkable. Even more exciting, we won the hearing and the school district agreed to provide compensatory services to the child this fall. Through this experience, I now know that I want to go into litigation as a career – and without EFE's trust and encouragement, I never would have had this experience.

## **JILLIAN LEE BURSTEIN**

I know that I would not have been able to have this experience without the funding I received from Equal Justice America. Providing such a generous stipend to allow me to pursue my passion was a gift I will forever cherish. Thank you so much for providing me this opportunity, and I hope this program continues to fund projects and opportunities for law students interested in serving the public interest.

Thank you again for your support.

Sincerely,

Jillian Burstein  
Loyola University of Chicago School of Law



## Advancing the human and civil rights of people with disabilities

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August 31, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

It is my pleasure to write this evaluation of Jillian Burstein's work this past summer at Equip for Equality ("EFE"). During her time at EFE, she has been a valuable member of our team and contributed significantly to our work. She displayed strong intellect, compassion, talent, and curiosity. She also demonstrated skills, enthusiasm, and dedication that made her a pleasure to work with and mentor.

While at EFE, Jillian worked with the Special Education Clinic to provide free legal services for children with special education needs. The EFE attorneys who worked with Jillian all gave her positive reviews for her work, effort, and commitment. In particular, she was routinely praised for her excellent research and writing skills, and her oral advocacy. In addition to writing strong, thoroughly-researched memos for attorneys, she also tackled case analyses on a variety of topics. More importantly, Jillian exhibited both an enthusiastic desire for knowledge and the ability to learn quickly.

From the very beginning, the Clinic attorneys were impressed with her experiences working with children with disabilities and her concomitant astute understanding of special education law. Jillian displayed a keen grasp on the law and was able to articulate legal theories and arguments both to parents and in office discussions. She consistently handled our Helpline phone calls promptly and efficiently because she was able to

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quickly identify the relevant issues and generally understood the law well enough to address them. She was very comfortable in analyzing cases and brainstorming strategies with our staff. For example, when she attended an IEP meeting for a child with autism, she was able to immediately comprehend the IEP discussions and offer insightful observations and helpful suggestions to her supervising attorney.

As mentioned above, Jillian has strong writing, research, and oral advocacy skills. Jillian wrote several memos on such topics as school records and procedures for administrative review; they were thorough, well-researched, and clearly written. She also displayed her tremendous advocacy abilities when she defended a client in a residency-expulsion hearing. During the hearing, she argued eloquently on behalf of a single mother with a disability whose son with developmental delays was being unfairly prevented from attending school and receiving special education services. She successfully conducted direct and cross examinations of witnesses, despite unexpected difficulties during the hearing.

Furthermore, Jillian was extremely conscientious and a hard worker. She always completed tasks assigned to her by the respective deadlines. Moreover, she consistently kept her supervising attorney updated of her progress on longer projects. Consequently, she was one of the most efficient interns we have had. For example, in one day, she was able to complete 5 intakes, which was significantly more than the average by other interns. Her supervising attorney noted that she also often assisted another intern with his assignments.

Finally, an evaluation of Jillian would not be complete without addressing her energetic personality and dedication. She consistently brought to our office positive energy and a joyful willingness to assist and learn. Overall, Jillian was a model intern, who greatly exceeded our expectations. She possessed excellent professional skills and personal skills that made her an important member of our team. We were absolutely thrilled she was

able to work for us, and are very grateful for Equal Justice America's support of her internship.

Thank you also for granting Jillian the partial scholarship for her 8 weeks worth of work with us. Jillian continues to volunteer with us and through your generosity, numerous children with disabilities and their families have been served.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'OP' with a stylized flourish.

Olga Pribyl

Managing Attorney, Special Education Clinic