

August 30, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Ruben,

This summer I was privileged to work at an agency—the Legal Assistance Foundation (LAF)—that is devoted to helping the low income population of Chicago and surrounding area access justice. The devotion the attorneys there had to improving the lives of their clients was both inspiring and educational.

I personally participated in client intakes and prepared complaints, petitions, and other legal documents. I researched law as well as federal, state, and school district policy and wrote memos on these topics. I performed discovery tasks such as record requests, Freedom Of Information Act requests, etc. and other case maintenance. I reviewed and comprehensively organized client medical, legal, and educational documents. I assisted in hearing preparation and attended administrative and court hearings as well as community meetings and Individualized Education Plan meetings.

The substantive areas of law in which I worked were child and family, disability, education, and guardianship. I enjoyed learning about these areas of law and about how to practically move cases forward in each of them, but what I most enjoyed was my interaction with clients and being able to hear their stories and learn how the law generally and my supervising attorneys, fellow interns and I specifically could play a role in their stories and hopefully help them.

In many instances, I was given the opportunity and ability first, to learn about the educational supports that exist and that students with disabilities are entitled to, second, to wade through a child's extensive educational, medical, and placement history to become extremely familiar with her needs, and then finally to bring these things together. Being able to advocate on behalf of students and to ensure that their educational plans meet their needs is a crucial first step to providing them with the education they deserve and to which they are entitled.

It was a privilege to enter even briefly into my clients stories and I know I will be a better attorney for what I learned not only working through the legal issues of their cases but also for what I learned from the graciousness with which many of them shared their selves with me.

Sincerely,

Emily Blumenstein
Loyola Chicago School of Law, Class of 2017