

October 26, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My summer with Cabrini Green Legal Aid (CGLA) was an exciting and rewarding experience. I would have not been able to accept an unpaid summer internship with CGLA had it not been for the financial support of Equal Justice America.

CGLA was founded by Check Hogren in 1972 to serve the residents of Cabrini Green, a Chicago housing project. Over the years CGLA has expanded and the organization now represents individuals across the city of Chicago in the areas of criminal law, criminal records, housing and family law. I spent the summer in the family law program working on custody, visitation, and domestic violence cases. As an intern in the family law program I was able to participate in all aspects of the case. I saw cases from the very begin when I conducted intakes, to the very end when I attended settlement conferences and trials.

Over the summer I greatly improved my legal research and writing skills. I assisted my supervisors with research on grandparent visitation rights, child support, and the termination of parental rights. For one client, I was charged with researching the convoluted statutory and case law on minor guardianship and then drafted a Petition for Guardianship. It was exciting to go with my supervisor to court and hear her argue many of the arguments I had made in the Petition. It was even more exciting when we eventually won the case and guardianship of the minor children was given to our client. Additionally, I was able to assist my supervisor in the drafting of summons, appearances, motions, memorandum, and correspondence to clients and opposing counsel.

As one of the only Spanish speaking summer interns, I was often utilized to assist with translation and to conduct interviews. I found working with Spanish speaking clients particularly rewarding because it allowed our clients, who are in extremely vulnerable positions, to truly have a voice. Often I was told it was comforting to have someone they could really talk to about their problems and know they were being heard and understood.

Prior to my internship with CGLA I had only work experience in media and international human rights. My time with CGLA gave me hands on legal experience and taught me that there are many ways to fight for and to defend human rights. One way to fight for human rights and social justice is direct service legal work. As an intern with CGLA I felt like I was part of team working to empower individuals and families. Perhaps I was not saving the world on a large scale, but I was working towards changing someone's life and ensuring that everyone, regardless of income, has zealous legal advocacy. CGLA affirmed my dedication to a career in public interest law and reaffirmed that equal access to the justice system builds bridges and strengthens lives. Having an Equal Justice America fellowship made this internship financially possible, and I am very grateful for my time at CGLA.

Sincerely,

Nickole Miller  
DePaul University College of Law  
Juris Doctor Candidate 2012

October 27, 2010

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

RE: EJA Fellowship Evaluation for Nickole Miller

Mr. Ruben,

I am writing to evaluate the EJA fellowship of Nickole Miller, a second-year student at DePaul University College of Law in Chicago, Illinois. Nickole spent last summer at Cabrini Green Legal Aid (CGLA), a non-profit that provides free legal services to impoverished Chicagoans in the areas of criminal defense, the expungement and sealing of criminal records, family law, and housing law. Nickole worked in our family law program under the direct supervision of attorney Kate Sharkey. Ms. Sharkey recently left her position at CGLA and moved to another state, but I have spoken with her about her experiences working with Nickole.

Our family law program handles many different kinds of cases, including divorce, visitation, custody, and guardianship. Nickole worked directly with clients in all of these areas. She met with clients, performed legal research, drafted memoranda, and prepared court documents. Although she was unable to represent clients in court pursuant to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 711, she was still able to assist in all other aspects of trial preparation and litigation. Nickole is obviously committed to public interest law and to providing direct legal services. She is able to establish rapport with clients and communicate effectively. Her research and writing is thorough and she is receptive to feedback. She works well independently and completes tasks in a timely manner. Nickole is thoughtful in her work and shows compassion in all she does.

In addition to working on cases, Nickole also performed intakes for potential clients. Each week, potential clients come to CGLA and meet with a volunteer or intern. These interviews are presented at a weekly case acceptance meeting attended by staff attorneys and volunteers. Nickole was thorough in her interviews and was able to identify and explore the relevant legal issues. She presented cases in a meaningful and concise way, and was an active participant in intake meetings.

Overall, Nickole was a committed and conscientious intern, and was a valuable asset to both our staff and our clients. It was a pleasure having her at CGLA. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Best,

Marissa Claxon  
Staff Attorney &  
Internship Coordinator