

August 31, 2011

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My summer fellowship experience was incredibly enriching and fulfilling. I worked in the Special Education Clinic of Equip for Equality, where I had the opportunity to work directly with clients, research educational legal issues, and develop great relationships with the attorneys and other interns at the organization. I not only improved my legal skills and learned a huge amount about advocacy, but I was also excited to get up and go to work each day.

As a former special education teacher, I was already very aware of the challenges that children with special needs face in public school systems. It was thus really exciting for me to be able to work directly with special needs children to make sure their rights were not being violated. The clients I worked with were often at a complete loss as to how to navigate the bureaucracy of schools and advocate for their children. I spoke with parents who were dedicated to making sure their children had the best education possible, but when their child's school refused to do what was necessary to provide the child with an appropriate education, the parents either believed that they were powerless or did not know how to even begin challenging the school. It was incredibly fulfilling to be able to empower these parents by giving them the tools to advocate for their children; or when that was unsuccessful, to represent them directly.

One case in particular that I worked on involved a client who was being severely bullied due to his disability, and instead of taking steps to address the bullying, the school isolated the student from his peers by taking away his lunch and activity privileges. The situation became so severe that the student did not want to attend school anymore and when he was bullied, he would not tell anyone for fear that something else would be taken away from him. He became depressed and ended up falling behind in all of his work. The school refused to do anything and would not take the student's mother seriously. Equip for Equality, however, was able to help his mother get him transferred to a new school where he is happy and healthy.

I loved working with an organization that plays such a vital roll in helping people in one of the most important areas of their lives. I was already dedicated to a career in public interest, but working at Equip for Equality this summer affirmed my commitment. I am very thankful that the Equal Justice America grant made it possible for me to have this experience.

Thank you,

Rebecca Glisan
Candidate for Juris Doctor, Class of 2013
Northwestern University 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:

Rebecca Glisan, a law student at Northwestern University, received funding from Equal Justice America and worked as a legal intern with us at Equip for Equality. We appreciate that Equal Justice America provided Rebecca with funding. Rebecca has been an excellent intern.

Rebecca's legal research and writing skills are particularly strong. Rebecca conducted research to determine the current case law regarding bullying of students with disabilities. Bullying is a major concern for students with disabilities, and we receive numerous calls from parents of students with disabilities who have been bullied at school. Rebecca drafted a detailed memo regarding her findings. Rebecca's memo is a valuable resource for all of our attorneys and will be helpful in many of our cases. Based upon Rebecca's memo, our attorneys are better aware of the legal options available to students with disabilities who are bullied at school.

In addition to Rebecca's strong research and writing skills, Rebecca has an excellent rapport with our clients. Rebecca's experience as a teacher prior to law school prepared her to interact effectively with students with disabilities and their parents. This experience also led Rebecca to easily work with agitated parents without getting rattled. Rebecca is a strong listener, and she validated the concerns that our Helpline callers were expressing to her. Her ability to empathize with our Helpline callers is an asset to our Special Education Clinic.

Rebecca provided telephone assistance to a number of parents of students with disabilities who called our Special Education Helpline. Rebecca's advice to the parents was always clear, and she did a great job in ensuring that she used parent-friendly terminology when providing legal advice. Oftentimes interns use legal jargon when providing legal advice to our Helpline callers. Rebecca was able to adjust her legal advice to ensure that the particular caller could understand and follow her advice. The attorneys supervising Rebecca rarely had to make substantive edits to Rebecca's written advice to parents.

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Rebecca is incredibly conscientious. She always completed her assignments in a timely manner. Even after her internship had technically ended, she came into the office a few more times in order to finish some work. She also drafted a fact sheet for us after the conclusion of her internship, because she knew that the fact sheet would provide valuable advice to our Helpline callers.

In addition to her excellent legal skills, Rebecca's personality is perfect for the special education law field. Rebecca is an energetic intern who motivates those around her. We know that she will be an asset to the field when she graduates from law school. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to work with Rebecca this summer and for Equal Justice America's generosity in making her summer internship a possibility.

Sincerely,

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

Olga Pribyl

Managing Attorney, Special Education Clinic