

August 26, 2014

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

My summer internship experience was very valuable, perhaps one of the best legal clerkships I have had thus far. Working in a legal aid organization that is well known and well respected gave me both the experience, and resulting confidence, that I need as I enter into my final year of law school. The attorneys at LAF were able to provide me with expertise, feedback, and motivation that allowed me to learn as much as I could in a relatively short period of time. By the time I concluded my placement I was disappointed to leave, but I felt more ready to take on cases and clients of my own this semester through my school's clinic, as well as in my future career.

One of the most salient learning experiences at my placement was actually nontraditional, in that it was different from the case where I helped prepare exhibits for a future trial or where we won on standing in court. Instead, this case involved an agglomeration of issues, including tackling lack of resources, exploring issues of professional ethics, and addressing my own personal desire to 'do it all.'

An adult client walked into our juvenile help desk looking for resources for her daughter and her family. She was very stressed and seemed to me as if she needed immediate assistance. Unfortunately, this help desk was not the place to offer such assistance, and law students such as myself were the only ones available at the time. I was the only law student in the group who had professional experience with the types of issues with which the client was dealing, and I felt her pain due to my own personal experiences.

In an effort to do our best, we decided that I should sit down with the client and help her contact various social service providers and explain the court process. I wanted very badly to help her and for some reason felt personally responsible at that moment for doing so.

However, upon calling my supervisor, he explained that there were various attorney-client confidentiality factors at play, as well as our organization's own ethics code. In short, though I

felt that I knew how to begin helping her, I was not in a position to form a professional relationship with her as a law student and offer her legal advice on that day. I struggled with the additional problem of having promised the client that I would help her as soon as possible. As it turned out, there was additional research that needed to be done, and I realized that I could not help her right then and there.

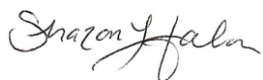
Upon further discussion with my supervisor, I learned the importance of balancing my own desire to be the ultimate savior to each and every client with the practical limitation of resources. We ended up taking the client's case on a limited basis, and it took a lot of research into various statutes and administrative law to discover the most appropriate and most timely remedies to offer her and her daughter. I met with the head supervising attorney several times to discuss not only what legal options there were, but also to strategize which ones would be the most viable for an elderly client who seemed to be at wits' end. By the end of the summer, I had had several meetings and phone calls, and we put her in touch with various social service agencies. We also offered her practical legal advice about the potential difficulty of the law on minors requiring authoritative intervention and the possible paths her case could take if continued in juvenile court.

I am still learning the hard truth of giving clients candid advice, and I believe it is likely a struggle for everyone in legal aid or other public interest work, especially when our personal history seeps into our work. Still, I am learning that this truth need not be a barrier, and that we should strive to find the best ways to help each client to the best of our abilities

All in all, I am very pleased with what I have learned, both difficult and encouraging, as I believe my experiences will make me a better lawyer in the end.

Thank you for providing the funding for my summer, as I would not have been able to have this opportunity without EJA's support.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sharon Falen".

**Sharon Falen**

Loyola University Chicago

Juris Doctor Candidate 2015



Equal justice starts here.

Via email

August 29, 2014

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

Re: Sharon Falen summer fellowship evaluation

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am pleased to write to you to evaluate Sharon Falen's fellowship with LAF in 2014. It was a pleasure to have her with us this summer.

During her time with us Sharon engaged in a wide variety of legal tasks. She appeared in court under her student license, communicated with opposing counsel, interviewed and counseled clients, interviewed witnesses, performed legal research and helped manage discovery in a case with over 5,000 pages of documents. I hope that with this broad range of experiences, her fellowship at LAF helped her start developing the set of skills she will need to become a successful child welfare lawyer.

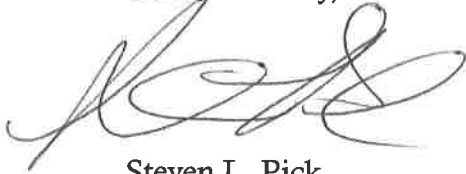
I was particularly impressed by Sharon's willingness to take on the task of learning and presenting on specialized eDiscovery software donated to LAF. No one at LAF had any familiarity with this software, so I tasked Sharon and another student to familiarize themselves with it, give a brief presentation on it, and use it to identify potentially helpful electronically stored information from our client's cell phone.

Sharon was always reliable and enthusiastic. She was always particularly concerned about making sure she did things the right way. She treated clients with respect and empathy. She was a primary point of contact for new clients, sorting out issues, providing initial advice, and evaluating cases for extended representation.

Additionally Sharon did some work with Rich Cozzola, who supervises our Children and Family Practice Group. He reports that she did excellent research on issues of statutory authorization and interpretation in a child welfare appeal on behalf of a grandmother seeking to retain custody of the grandson she had raised for five years. She also helped out with juvenile records expungements, and did extensive work researching legal and social service resources and providing complex advice for a mother with an adolescent who needed extensive support.

Please contact Rich or me if you have any questions. We will be happy to answer them.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'SLP' with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Steven L. Pick  
Senior Attorney  
312-347-8301 (voice)  
773-814-0342 (mobile)  
312-612-1401 (direct fax)  
[spick@lafchicago.org](mailto:spick@lafchicago.org)

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Richard Cozzola' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Richard Cozzola  
Practice Group Director  
Children & Families  
312-347-8356