

August 31, 2017

Dan Ruben

Equal Justice America

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My Equal Justice of America Fellowship was nothing short of amazing.

During the summer, I worked at the Michigan Poverty Law Program. Unlike other legal services offices, my job was not client facing, but instead I researched the latest issues in consumer law. During my internship, I researched wage assignment and the introduction of the new Debt Management Act in Michigan. Also, I helped to organize the mock trial for our 2017 Advocacy Conference.

Researching wage assignments was very eye opening. Before coming to MPLP, I did not know that one could not assign their wages to creditors or the court. Throughout the summer, we wanted to find policy in which the debtors could not assign wages to the creditors. During my research, I found a variety of responses from states that completely prohibited wage assignment to state that allowed it under some condition. Researching wage assignment reminded me of how important it is to argue for your clients' rights even when making policies. Policies can eventually have an effect on legal aid clients down the line so it is important that we as advocates fight on all levels.

Also, I researched the upcoming Debt Management Act that was introduced to the Michigan senate. In this assignment, I had to compare the Debt Management

Act with similar acts across the country. While I found a variety of acts, none really compared to the Michigan Act. However, all had extremely high interest rates and penalty fees. It was important to look at these acts because as legal service advocates we should argue that these interest rates should not be so high. High interest rate would put our clients in a worse of position then they are already in. Researching these issues made me very insightful about poverty. It also made me aware of why teaching money management is important and ultimately why the cycle of poverty continues.

Lastly, I worked on organizing our mock trial for our 2017 Advocacy Conference. I was responsible for finding jurors and witnesses for the trial. It was exciting to communicate with the public about legal services work. After the trial, several witnesses stated about how the trial impacted their view of the legal process and was inspired to continue to keep legal service corporations in mind as we face tough times. I would recommend any law student to work at the Michigan Poverty Law Program if they are looking for a non-traditional legal experience.

Alanna Peoples

Wayne State University Law School

Class of 2019



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Re: Clerkship of Alanna Peoples, Student from Wayne State University
School of Law

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I am writing to report back on Alanna Peoples' clerkship with the Michigan Poverty Law Program (MPLP), for which she was given a grant from Equal Justice America. Ms. Peoples, like many of our law clerks, helped our office in many different ways. Ms. Peoples primarily conducted research and writing projects for MPLP's Consumer Law specialist, Lorrain Brown. MPLP is the statewide support office for the legal aid programs throughout Michigan, providing case-specific assistance to field office staff, as well as conducting trainings and regular task force meetings, and acting as co-counsel on impact litigation cases. MPLP substantive law attorneys (such as Ms. Brown) often assist field staff with research and writing tasks, as well as draft articles for various legal publications and prepare presentations for trainings. Ms. Peoples assisted Ms. Brown with these tasks, often by conducting legal research and writing memoranda (both formal and informal) summarizing her findings. She spent significant time discussing her findings with Ms. Brown, strategizing additional research, and discussing solutions to legal issues.

Ms. Peoples also assisted MPLP in preparing for its annual Trial Advocacy Skills Training, a week-long event culminating in a day-long mock trial. Ms. Peoples was tasked with organizing and recruiting 45 volunteers to act as witnesses and jurors for the mock trial, and assisted Ms. Brown on the day of the mock trial as well.

Ms. Peoples performed extremely well at her duties while with the Michigan Poverty Law Program. We were grateful for her assistance and grateful for the Equal Justice America grant as well, so that she could be compensated for her work. Should you have any further questions about Ms. Peoples or her clerkship, please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Angela S. Tripp
Co-Managing Attorney
Michigan Poverty Law Program