

Rai Sue Sussman

2004 PILP Fellowship at the East Bay Community Law Center, Housing Unit, Berkeley, CA

Last summer, I was able to work for the East Bay Community Law Center (www.ebclc.org) in Berkeley, California. This was a great experience in many ways, and I would recommend working there or anywhere that you want to get a PILP grant for, if possible.

I knew I wanted to do client centered social services work for at least one summer, and I also wanted to work in the San Francisco Bay Area, where I am from. I got a Haywood Burns Fellowship from the National Lawyers Guild (<http://nlg.org/students/students.htm>) to work at EBCLC's Housing Unit, which helps low income clients fight evictions, and helps with subsidized housing and habitability issues. The Haywood Burns Fellowship comes with a \$2000 stipend, which is great. I decided to apply for a PILP for a partial stipend.

EBCLC was a great place to work. It was founded by Boalt Hall (UC Berkeley's law school) students with the dual mission of providing legal support in the community and providing students with clinical experience. EBCLC is thus set up for student interns and gives them a lot of work as well as a lot of support. There were 15 other interns working there over the summer in four different units, including the Housing unit. We had a few days of orientation to the office and the law, and then I was thrown directly into the work, under the supervision of an attorney.

Over the ten weeks I worked there got to do a variety of hands on legal work. I did intake for the Housing unit, worked in a clinic once a week, and had my own caseload of 15 clients (of which I would actively work on three or four each day). I was mainly working on fighting evictions, but as the facts of each case are different each case was a learning experience. Over the course of the summer, and as the cases progressed I got to work on different aspects of the cases, from filing answers, writing and filing motions to set aside and motions for judgment on the pleadings to writing settlement letters and negotiating with opposing counsel. I also got to represent one client at a hearing where the Oakland Housing Authority proposed to terminate her Section 8 voucher. Even though as a 2L I am not certified, I could represent clients in the Housing Authority's hearing.

I also worked in the Low Income Eviction Project clinic once a week. This clinic is located in the courthouse, and helps people prepare their paperwork in fighting evictions. For four to five hours, we would see and help people create Answers, Stays of Evictions, and other motions as needed. This was great because I was helping people know what their rights are as tenants, while at the same time I got experience doing interviews to get facts and spot issues that could help the clients.

Looking back, the summer was much better than I had imagined it would be. I learned a lot about landlord/tenant law and issues, and about what working in legal services for low income people is like. I also met lot of people in the Bay Area's progressive legal community while being able to spend time with my friends and family from my life before law school.