

Farmworker Legal Services – 2011 Exit Memo (Andrew)

I began the 2011 summer with Farmworker Legal Services having very little legal public interest experience. I had rarely interacted with clients, and had never seen firsthand the infrastructural, economic, and cultural barriers that often prevent migrant workers from accessing basic services available to most Americans. By the end of the summer I was able to identify client issues, ask the appropriate follow-up questions, and help clients get the help they needed.

This change happened thanks to a patient, accommodating, and knowledgeable FLS staff. Whether it was learning how to operate the phones or learning the subtleties of preparing a naturalization application, everyone in the office was very helpful, and provided insight that I will take with me and hopefully use in the years to come.

What's more, the skills interns gain with FLS serve a real purpose. On two separate occasions, I visited a small southern Michigan town to find migrant workers who detassel corn during the summer for several large agribusinesses. On the first visit, my experience on earlier outreach visits allowed me to effectively find the migrant workers in this town and communicate to them the services and help that FLS offered. On the second visit, my experience with housing laws and migrant housing earlier in the summer allowed me to spot deficiencies, document them, and prepare a complaint for various state government agencies. Without the guidance of the FLS staff and the continued exposure to farm worker issues throughout the summer, none of these activities would have been possible.

I would highly recommend this internship to any students wishing to improve their Spanish, gain more interaction with clients, or acquire more public interest experience. You won't be disappointed.