

Suzanne Firestone
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FLS Exit Memo

I spent the summer following my first year of law school at Farmworker Legal Services. In many ways, this internship was exactly what I hoped my first legal experience would be: I had the opportunity to interact with clients (or potential clients), work on a wide variety of cases (employment, housing, immigration), develop working relationships with fellow interns and staff attorneys, and come away with a better understanding of the realities of the practice of law.

This summer, I really enjoyed the opportunity to interact with so many clients, and potential clients. On outreach, I introduced myself to dozens and dozens of people, and explained what FLS does and what are some of the basic rights that they enjoy. On outreach trips I also was able to stop to visit clients who had already contacted the office or who already had ongoing cases, in order to gather more information about their situation. I also met several clients when they came by the office, in order to progress their case in some way. This all enabled me to more fully understand the work that we do, and who we are serving, and to develop relationships with a few of the clients that I worked with all summer. After sitting at someone's kitchen table, or being invited in for a tamale, or listening to their story across the desk, I felt that much more motivated to do whatever I could to help ensure a positive outcome for the situation at hand.

This summer I learned about the variety of state and federal laws that protect migrant and seasonal farmworkers and create a safe working environment—but they are violated as the rule, not the exception. It was somewhat of a joke at a staff meeting, but it really is true: you could call a migrant farmworker at random, and talk about their issues with their wages or work and living conditions. Accordingly, the work that FLS does is at once hugely important and extremely daunting. I am proud to say that I was a part of this, at least for one summer, and have nothing but respect for the people that devote their careers to this work.