

2005 Internship (Caitlin Berberich)

Farmworker Legal Services is a great way to get exposure to a wide range of legal issues while at the same time work with one of the most marginalized populations in our society. Highlights of my summer included helping a couple who was the victim of identity theft, compiling a VAWA self-petition for a woman who was the victim of domestic violence, and writing demand letters to employers to recover unpaid wages. At FLS, I also experienced the full range of legal advocacy that can be used to aid farmworkers. I worked on employment litigation against farms that had violated various wage and housing laws. I also communicated with the Department of Labor and helped clients file complaints through those administrative processes. However, FLS does not only engage in legal advocacy. While interning with FLS, I participated in extensive outreach and educational programs. I visited migrant labor camps to educate workers and attended Migrant Resource Council and Head Start meetings to educate other farmworker advocates.

One of the best parts of working at FLS is realizing how much the farmworker population of Michigan relies on its services. Multiple times throughout the summer, I answered calls and took intake for farmworkers in emergency situations. Once it was a father calling because his employer had cut off the electricity, water, and gas in his trailer and he and his wife had a newborn baby to care for. Another time, a woman came in because her boyfriend had been picked up by immigration officials and she didn't know where to find him. Working at FLS was rewarding because I knew that I was helping to provide some stability and recourse for migrant farmworkers who elsewhere in their lives constantly experience job and financial instability, exploitation, and hardship.