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This summer, I had the opportunity to intern for the Unemployment Law Project in Seattle. The Unemployment Law Project is a non-profit law firm that assists unemployed workers who were denied unemployment benefits. The internship was a remote position, so I performed my duties online from home. As this position was my first experience working for a law firm, I gained a lot of real-world experience in the legal profession.

My most common task working for the Unemployment Law Project was completing intake interviews with prospective clients over the phone. The intake interviews involved me confirming basic information with the client and asking them to detail their situation, which I would summarize in my intake notes and submit to the staff attorneys. This part of the internship was very interesting, as I was able to communicate directly with the client. Many clients I worked with were distraught about their financial hardships due to their loss of unemployment benefits or being charged overpayments by the Employment Security Department, and I learned firsthand about the real-world stakes in the legal profession. Overall, speaking with these clients was a very rewarding part of my internship.

Aside from the interviews, I was given a wide variety of different tasks from the Unemployment Law Project, which enriched my experience in the legal field. These included performing research on laws regarding translators in the Office of Administrative Hearings, attending meetings with OAH judges to discuss legal matters, and attending virtual seminars on micro aggressions and discrimination in the court. Of all these experiences, the one that was most rewarding was my opportunity to represent a client in the OAH.

Towards the middle of my internship, I was given virtual hearing training and assigned a client to represent in an OAH hearing. I spent several weeks meeting with the client over the phone and discussing his case, which involved a denial of unemployment benefits despite having a health disability. After each meeting, I would compile notes and eventually drafted a list of direct questions to ask at the hearing. On the day of the phone hearing, the weight of representing a real client with real stakes before a judge was both exciting and nerve wracking. Ultimately, the hearing went smoothly, however we unfortunately were not given the decision to approve benefits for the client.

Thus, I was tasked with drafting a petition for review to appeal to the decision, which was my last task for the Unemployment Law Project. I worked closely with my supervising attorney to draft this petition and gained a lot of legal writing experience through this project. Ultimately, the final draft was approved, and I was able to submit the petition for review to the OAH. This process of representing a client and completing a petition was the most valuable experience of my internship, and it gave me real experience working as an attorney.

Overall, my internship with the Unemployment Law Project was an invaluable experience that gave me insight into the work of an attorney and the opportunity to help people in the public interest field. My skills in legal oral and written communication have improved a greatly thanks to this opportunity, and I look forward to carrying this experience with me into my 2L year.