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Final Report

My name is Olivia and I am a third year Law, Justice, and Society student. My interests are mainly in all of the different areas of law and I plan on attending law school after I finish my undergrad. This semester, I was placed at Dalhousie legal aid. Dal legal aid is a community-based legal aid service located in the North End of Halifax. Not only does Dal legal aid provide legal services to those who would not otherwise be able to afford it, but it is a hub where Law students can learn practically, and Dalhousie students can go to for legal advice. Dalhousie legal aid is the oldest clinical law program in Canada and was the first legal aid service for low-income communities in Nova Scotia. In addition to assisting in various legal aid services, Dal legal aid participates in community outreach, education, organizing, lobbying, and test cases to combat injustices impacting low-income community members.

Dalhousie Legal Aid has a three-part mandate which outlines their objectives as a legal aid society. The first objective of Dal legal aid is to provide legal services for those who would not be able to afford it otherwise. The second objective is to conduct research, provide information, make recommendations, and engage in programs relating to legal aid and law reform in Nova Scotia. Dal Legal Aid's final objective is to provide an educational experience in the solution of legal problems for Students enrolled in the Faculty of Law at Dalhousie University. Dalhousie legal aid deals with a variety of legal issues from human rights law to

family law. Their broad focuses and cases allow students, like me, to learn, research, and gain practical experience in a legal environment.

I thoroughly enjoyed and continue to enjoy my time working for Dal legal aid. I have learnt a lot being placed here this semester; my experience at Dal legal aid has reaffirmed my passion for law and justice. This semester, I did not have one, single, large project I worked on in particular, but I did new legal research every week. Each week, my supervisor would send me an email with questions she was interested in for the cases she was working on. I would then go on to research and answer these questions for her. I used legal databases, such as CanLii and the official Court of Nova Scotia to find cases, literature, and legislation concerning the topics my supervisor was interested in. After I found case law, literature, and legislation pertaining to the topic of interest, I would create a document summarizing my findings and send it off to my instructor. My position this semester was remote, so my role in the organization may be atypical compared to other years but nevertheless, I looked forward to completing my hours every week.

I have learned so much this semester about various topics within the legal sphere. The first topic I researched this semester had to do with child support and retro-active child support payments. I found a variety of cases, literature, and legislation supporting different angles to this topic. I came out of this week understanding the ‘golden rule’ of family, and divorce law: the best interest of the child is always at the number one priority in judge’s minds. Understanding this golden rule helped me in the preceding weeks of research. Staying in the family law realm, one week I researched the factors commonly considered when assessing spousal support in short-term marriages.

Along with this, I researched whether one spouse leaving their country of citizenship to marry in another country makes them entitled to more spousal support. The length of the

relationship, each spouse's income, and whether one spouse relied on the other spouse's income are deciding factors in spousal support entitlement. I researched the child abuse registry in each province. Something interesting that I discovered this week was that only three provinces have a child abuse registry. I also researched the rights of grandparents to their grandchildren one week and the admissibility/exclusion of evidence in a civil setting the next week. Continuing on with the theme of admissibility of evidence, this most recent week I researched a bunch of cases concerning the line between personal privacy and evidence, specifically the use of therapeutic medical documents as evidence.

Someone who would enjoy being placed at Dal Legal Aid would be interested in learning more about the law and practicing legal research skills. This placement would be beneficial to an aspiring lawyer or someone who hopes to get into the legal field after graduation. Doing a practicum at Dal Legal Aid would be right for someone who has interest in law, especially in the areas of human rights and family law. To enjoy your time with Dal Legal Aid, it is important that you enjoy reading caselaw, legislation, and legal literature. Being able to apply cases and legislation to problems and the requested topic of your supervisor would also be a good skill to have. Overall, I had a great experience at Dal Legal Aid and I really believed it helped me get the experience I need to thrive in my future endeavours.