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Powell Fellow Dan Hausman Will Advocate for Early Education Intervention



Dan Hausman, who has been named the 11th Powell Fellow, will use his fellowship to help developmentally challenged, low-income children.

Third-year law student Dan Hausman will get a chance to apply his passion for childhood education as the University of Virginia School of Law's 11th Powell Fellow. The fellowship, which offers a \$40,000 salary for a graduate working in the public interest, will allow Hausman to help developmentally challenged, low-income children get the education services they need.

Hausman will provide direct civil legal services through the Chicago-based Health & Disability Advocates. The nonprofit organization represents clients up to age 21 on matters relating to their eligibility for state or federal services and benefits. The organization currently doesn't have a staff specialist for children age 5 and younger who need special education – a niche Hausman will fill.

"The problem in Chicago and in other big cities is that children from birth through age 5 aren't yet in the school system and they aren't identified for education services, even though they should be getting them," Hausman said.

Parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities are sometimes unaware that they might have access to early intervention services for their children under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, he said.

Children suffering from physical, mental or emotional stumbling blocks can benefit dramatically from early help, Hausman said. He witnessed such benefits firsthand as a substitute teacher for autistic elementary school children, prior to becoming a full-time high school teacher in Fairfax County, Va., he said. The children who received early intervention were much more proficient in the classroom than those who had not, he said.

The Powell Fellowship is named in honor of former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr. and is awarded to third-year law students at the Law School or recent Virginia law graduates who complete a judicial clerkship by fall of the award year.



Hausman, who holds a master's degree in education from James Madison University and who worked recently in Chicago's school system, said he knew that education law was his calling when he first applied to law school.

"I saw a system, I felt, that really isn't as good as it could be," he said. "Parents need advocates, schools need to be more efficient, and everyone needs to work together to get a better education system."

Hausman said he expects to identify potential clients through Health & Disability Advocates' existing relationship with area hospitals and clinics, an alliance known as the Chicago Medical-Legal Partnership for Children. As part of the collaborative effort, health professionals actively screen children for potential learning disabilities and make pro bono referrals as needed.

Similarly, he plans to use a street law partnership he recently initiated with Chicago-area law schools to build rights awareness in places such as churches and community centers, he said. Hausman is currently president of Law School's Street Law student organization, a program that introduces high school students to the law and their legal rights.

Hausman said that as his career develops, he ultimately would like to make a difference at the policy level. Until then, he said, he's excited about working directly with clients and building his reputation as a public advocate, starting with the opportunities made possible by the Powell Fellowship.

He praised the staff of the Mortimer Caplin Public Service Center for its help in applying for the fellowship and, more importantly, for facilitating his career path.

"They're really supportive of trying to get you into a position where you can thrive in the public service sector and where you can be happy and do what you want to do," he said. "Not everyone comes to UVA to be in a big firm, and I think the school really recognizes that."

[Annie Kim](#), assistant dean for public service, said Hausman received the fellowship not only based on the strength of his proposal and his sponsoring agency's reference, but also on his enthusiasm and preparedness.

"Knowing Dan's deep commitment to public service, the advocacy skills he's developed through clinical and academic coursework at Virginia, and his prior experience as an educator, I have no doubt that he will make a profound difference in the lives of his clients," she said. "We are proud that Dan will

undertake this important work in the spirit of public service exemplified by Justice Lewis Powell."

Kim added that Hausman approached the Public Service Center knowing exactly what he wanted to achieve and how he wanted to achieve it. "All he needed was the funding," she said.

REPORTED BY ERIC WILLIAMSON