



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: National Center for Youth Law

Update 1: I am excited to share that I started my summer position at National Center for Youth Law on the Justice and Equity Team. NCYL works to transform government agencies and public systems that impact youth, including education, health, immigration, foster care, and youth justice. NCYL's mission is to center youth through impact litigation, policy advocacy, collaboration, and research.

NCYL works to transform the youth justice system so that it better embodies true justice and equity for children. NCYL advances community-based, health-centered alternatives to harmful system practices, building towards a culture in which the system treats children as children. The work prioritizes evidence-based solutions that are proven to decrease recidivism and meet children with empathy and care. Specifically, the Justice and Equity Team works to achieve Debt Free Justice. When youth are involved in the juvenile legal system, they can be charged thousands of dollars in unjust fees and fines. NCYL works to eliminate this harmful practice.

Update 2: My current summer role at National Center for Youth Law has allowed me the opportunity to engage in policy advocacy efforts and impact litigation targeting system-wide abuses in both the education and juvenile justice systems.

The National Center for Youth Law's Justice and Equity Team works to achieve Debt Free Justice. When youth are involved in the legal system, they can be charged thousands of dollars in unjust fees and fines. The National Center for Youth Law works to eliminate this harmful practice. We conduct legal research in various states, including Iowa and Missouri, to determine statutory schemes relevant to youth fees and fines. We attend municipal court, truancy court, and juvenile court in the relevant states to determine how the statutory scheme is actually implemented on the ground. We work with local partners who support our Debt Free Justice advocacy, including disability rights organizations, children's justice groups, public defender offices, and community organizers.



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Update 3: My current summer role at National Center for Youth Law allows me the opportunity to engage in research projects, policy advocacy efforts, and impact litigation targeting system-wide abuses in both the education and juvenile justice systems. One example of crossover between these systems is School Resource Officers.

Over the past few weeks, I conducted research regarding School Resource Officers in the most populated Iowa cities. School Resource Officers are police employed in schools, intended to act as safety coordinators, campus monitors, and restoration facilitators. That being said, minority students have significantly more interaction with School Resource Officers, which has led to almost 6x more arrests than their white peers. Some cities, including Des Moines and Iowa City, abolished their School Resource Officer Programs to increase student power, restore the community, and divert violations of the law away from convictions and placement within the juvenile and adult court systems.

Update 4: My current summer role at National Center for Youth Law allows me the opportunity to engage in research projects, policy advocacy efforts, and impact litigation targeting system-wide abuses in both the education and juvenile justice systems. One example of this includes impact litigation against Palm Beach County School District regarding Florida's Mental Health Act.

Florida's Mental Health Act, known as the Baker Act, gives police, judges, and school employees the power to involuntarily commit school children to a psychiatric facility if they appear to have a mental illness and could cause harm to themselves or others. School employees regularly seize children for involuntary examination who do not meet the criteria of the Baker Act. School officials routinely take young children to psychiatric centers, sometimes for normal, childish behavior or for conduct stemming from developmental disabilities, over parental objections. Litigation seeks to halt the district's illegal use of the Baker Act.

Update 5: My current summer role at National Center for Youth Law allows me the opportunity to engage in research projects, policy advocacy efforts, and impact litigation targeting system-wide abuses in both the education and juvenile justice systems. My time at National Center for Youth Law has been incredibly fun and rewarding. The summer truly flew by!

One legal research project I took part in during my final weeks was related to the spousal communications privilege, an evidence rule that excludes information privately disclosed between husband and wife in the confidence of the marital relationship. The privilege does not apply to communications made in the presence of third parties, and generally applies only to statements, not acts. Exploring how the spousal communications privilege applies in different circuits was a fascinating way to support National Center for Youth Law's valuable work and apply what I learned in my 2L evidence class.



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I am extremely grateful to be an Equal Justice America fellow, which made this opportunity possible. Equal Justice America facilitates civil legal aid access to those who would otherwise have none by sponsoring law students.