



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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**Update 1:** It has been four weeks since I started working at CHIRLA as a Student Legal Services intern at their Sacramento Office. Having worked at University of the Pacific - McGeorge School of Law's Immigration Clinic as a student attorney, it did not take long for me to adjust working here. However, I'm still getting used to how organized and well run CHIRLA is.

So far, I have been working on cases involving U-Visa, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, Green Card Renewals, Naturalization, and DACA Renewals. It amazes me how many people have signed up for legal services at CHIRLA. It just goes to show how great CHIRLA is at advocacy and educating the public on the various immigration benefits they could be eligible for.

This week, I was made aware that the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals will be considering the DACA decision made in last year's lawsuit in July 2022. Because we do not know what direction the outcome of the case will be, we have been trying to get as many DACA renewals filed before that date. I just hope that the July decision does not make things worse for existing DACA recipients and people who are looking to apply for DACA for the first time.

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**Update 2:** CHIRLA's Sacramento Student Legal Services team recently had a DACA and Naturalization Clinic in the Dreamer Resource Center at California State University-Sacramento. I had the opportunity to be a part of the clinic and give back to the community. It made me glad to see that we had such a successful turnout for our clinic. This shows that CHIRLA's ability to get more people informed about their potential eligibility for immigration relief is having a positive effect. It also means that more immigrants are being proactive and taking steps towards remedying their immigration issues.

I still believe that a prevalent issue in immigration is the lack of awareness. Even though there are people that are eligible for immigration relief, it's no use if they themselves don't know about it. That is why we should take an active step towards educating more people and bring awareness to the communities. You can begin to spread



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awareness by partnering with schools, community centers, or organizations and host informational events that explain more about the individual types of immigration relief.

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**Update 3:** My internship at CHIRLA will be ending soon and I wanted to share a bit about one of my Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases. SIJS is an avenue of relief for undocumented children to obtain legal status when they cannot be reunified with one or both parents due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment and when it is not in their best interest to return to their home country. This is one of the few ways undocumented children can become eligible for a green card and eventually citizenship. My case is a bit special because my client is 20 years old and her eligibility for SIJS expires when she turns 21 in a few months. Because I was the only person in my team that had experience with SIJS, I was made lead caseworker. This past month has been a rush of conducting interviews, drafting forms and declarations, and locating all the people that require notice. I was finally able to finish drafting everything and we are at the stage where we are nearly ready to file my client's Guardianship and SIJ Findings petition. She is so happy to hear that everything is going smoothly!

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**Update 4:** This week was my last week interning for CHIRLA's Student Legal Services team. While I was wrapping things up and reassigning my ongoing cases to other caseworkers, I had a couple of encounters with potential clients that needed assistance with their DACA Renewals. A couple of them were on the fence about retaining CHIRLA's services because of the ongoing case regarding the Texas decision on DACA. Many DACA recipients feel that they need to file their renewals on their own online because the online process is faster than mailing it in. This made me realize how much of an impact the case is having on these DACA recipients because the anxiety this has generated is causing them to choose speed over the reliability of legal representation. I just hope at the end of the day, the court makes the right decision and not ruin the lives of DACA holders.

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**Update 5:** It has been about three weeks since I wrapped up my summer internship with CHIRLA's Student Legal Services Team in Sacramento. As I'm reflecting on my experience interning at CHIRLA, I can't believe how much I have learned in those 10 weeks. Before my summer internship with CHIRLA, I was a student attorney with the Immigration Clinic at University of the Pacific - McGeorge School of Law. There, I had experience dealing with different types of immigration matters like DACA Renewals, Naturalization, Consular Processing, VAWA, and other types of family-based immigration.

This summer, I wanted to take the opportunity to gain experience working on other types of immigration relief. Thankfully, Sylvia Ortiz, the Managing Attorney for the Student Legal Services Team, and Brian Guzman, the Supervising Representative at the Sacramento Office, were happy to let me work on cases I have never done before. Some of those cases were Green Card Renewals, I-130 Spousal Petition, U-Visa, Adjustment of Status. Through CHIRLA's own systems and procedures, I was able to refine my skills with DACA Renewals, Naturalization, and Special Immigration Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases.



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Aside of working on cases, I had the opportunity to participate in community outreach when the Sacramento Student Legal Services team had a DACA and Naturalization Clinic in the Dreamer Resource Center at California State University, Sacramento. This was a great experience because I was able to educate people on DACA and Naturalization and help them with those cases.

One thing I believe was extremely important was getting the opportunity to work with clients telephonically and virtually. As COVID begins to become a part of everyday life, attorneys need to adapt and find ways to provide effective legal representation to clients. Working with clients telephonically and virtually has really developed my legal skills. I learned to conduct client screenings and interviews more efficiently. I also learned to explain to my clients their legal issues in layman terms so they may understand their case better.

I am incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to be a part of the Student Legal Services Team at CHIRLA. The wonderful people there were really welcoming and provided me an environment to grow as a better advocate. Even though my internship as CHIRLA has ended, I plan to continue working for the Student Legal Services Team after I graduate and pass the bar exam in 2023. I hope to work with them as an attorney in the future.

Please consider supporting Equal Justice America because their funding has allowed other interns and I to fully focus on our internship throughout the summer.