



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:

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Update 1: As of now, I have just begun the third week of my internship with the East Bay Community Law Center, and for most of my time thus far I have been receiving a crash course in public interest lawyering. During the first two weeks, we've had trainings on everything from debt collection proceedings, to an overview of movement lawyering, and trainings on how to work with vulnerable and traumatized populations. It's definitely been an information overload! But I am excited to be learning so much in my chosen practice group – the consumer justice clinic – and getting to spend the summer with such amazing attorneys and fellow interns. I have also been assigned my first two clients for the summer, who I will be assisting my supervisor in representing as they deal with debt collection proceedings and a frivolous lawsuit for unlicensed use of licensed content, respectively. I already have some background in consumer justice issues, having interned at a large organization in the space just after graduating college, so it has been fun getting back into the groove of learning about ongoing policy developments in consumer financial protection and debt and lending issues, and once again getting to play a role in helping protect vulnerable consumers from predatory financial practices. It's shaping up to be a great summer and I'm excited for what's in store.

Update 2: These past few weeks at the East Bay Community Law Center I have been more fully working on client matters. I now have two clients who are assigned to me to manage full-time, and I participate in one to two client phone calls per week. One of those calls is during an intake-period, during which I help gather information on potential clients for East Bay generally, including gathering demographic information, income, and information on potential legal issues. It has been a lot of fun! Last Friday, I led a phone call with a client for the first-time, while my supervisor listened in and gave feedback and direction. The client was seeking help navigating small claims court, and it was interesting to both learn the small claims process for me, as well as help someone work through it. Going forward, I will be working on two lawsuits: one going to federal court regarding unauthorized use of licensed content (under a federal statute) and the other a debt defense case, where a debt buyer purchased the debt of someone and is now suing them without providing proper evidence. As the summer is progressing, I am learning more and more about what public interest litigation in the consumer space looks like, and I finally feel like I'm getting a grasp on how to approach a variety of cases.

Update 3: Over the past few weeks since my last update, I have ramped up participation in client meetings – including intake meetings, consultations, and Q&A sessions – and I think it's become my favorite part of my



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summer internship with the East Bay Community Law Center. For some of these meetings, I am the sole EBCLC person on the phone, and I get to walk clients / potential clients through the intake process, taking notes on their legal issues, and clarifying for them what legal services we offer – and referring them to outside organizations when their issues go outside our capabilities. I think what I find most enjoyable about client meetings is that it feels so direct and impactful – literally guiding someone through the legal process. Of course, all work we do at East Bay is important, but getting facetime with clients has been really rewarding.

Beyond client meetings, I have also been working with the other interns to create a presentation for community members about credit reports. The presentation will cover everything from how credit reports work to how to check your credit report, how to report inaccurate information on credit reports, when credit reports are used, how to freeze your credit report, and resources for improving one's credit. We will be presenting on Zoom at the end of July. Should be a good time!

Update 4: This past week, the other East Bay Community Law Center interns and I completed a PowerPoint presentation that we were originally going to present to the community but that was cut for logistical reasons. The presentation was about credit reports and provided information on red flags to look out for in credit reports, what to do if you see one of these red flags, and several resources community members can use to protect themselves. Those resources include uses fraud alerts and security freezes, which are provided for free from the credit reporting bureau. This project was a good opportunity for me to learn more about how credit reporting agencies operate and what resources are available to help when you see something weird. It was also a really nice opportunity for the interns to work on something together, especially when our internship has been almost entirely remote, and we don't have many interactions with one another outside of zoom calls.

Beyond the credit reporting presentation, I have continued to work on client matters and, most recently, have been learning about how to enforce a judgment from small claims court. I didn't know anything about small claims prior to this internship so it has been fun to learn more about the process and refresh my civil procedure skills. All in all, looking forward to a few more things as my summer wraps up.

Update 5: This summer I worked as a legal intern in the consumer justice clinic at the East Bay Community Law Center. We covered everything from debt defense and debt collection, identity theft, student loan issues, credit reporting issues and payday loans. In effect, if a client's issue touched some financial need, our unit would get involved. As someone interested in consumer law and financial regulation, it was a good experience seeing the various ways the financial system touches people, especially low-income people, in their daily lives.

With respect to the program, I worked alongside three other attorneys on a team of three attorneys and two program coordinators, but I primarily worked with one attorney and then had group sessions with the other interns. Those group sessions revolved around two broad projects: a group presentation focusing on credit reports that also covered how consumers can initiate a security freeze and a fraud alert, and a mock brief in



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response to opposing counsel's motion for summary judgment in a debt defense case. The group project was not particularly expansive and ended up getting scrapped in the end. On the other hand, the mock brief was fun to explore, as it introduced students to motions for intervention, allowed us an opportunity to further learn how to research case history and case validity, and gave us the opportunity to practice writing a brief on our own without support.

All that said, my favorite part of the summer was working with clients. I got to work with clients every week, including through an intake period that each intern would lead for one day of the week, and a client clinic that took places every other week or every three weeks. The intake period entailed calling new clients, getting their demographic information to make sure we could serve them, listening to their legal issues to issue spot, and then determining three things: 1) is this a legal issue? 2) is this an issue we can help with? 3) if it's not, can we provide a referral to an organization that can help? It was a great exercise in thinking like a lawyer and getting to lead my own calls, and going forward it's definitely something that I know I enjoy doing and hope to get further experience in. The client clinic sessions were similar, but instead of doing a broad issue-spotting exercise, the clients would come in with specific legal issues and then we would issue-spot and help problem solve, under the supervision of an attorney. For the same reasons as intake, it was a great opportunity to serve as point-person for a client and take responsibility over a matter.

Other highlights this summer: I got to track down a financial instrument one of our clients took out in the late-1990s and is having trouble accessing because the bank says it doesn't exist; I got to work on a case in federal court involving a lawsuit between a media company and a small business owner; and I got to meet some wonderful people at a great organization. All in all, it was a good summer.