

Re: Summer 2015 Fellowship Experience

I worked at Prairie State Legal Services as part of my Equal Justice America Fellowship for the summer of 2015. At Prairie State Legal Services, I worked on a variety of cases serving mostly clients who were homeless, were facing eviction, or were victims of domestic abuse.

I worked on one case that involved domestic violence, where we helped our client to obtain an order of protection. Our client had to flee her home and she did not want to return. However, she was still on the lease along with her abuser. While we were able to help our client obtain protection from her abuser, we also wanted to help free her from her lease obligations and protect her from being sued for back rent or from getting an eviction on her record, which would have made it difficult for her to find housing in the future. I researched the Illinois Safe Homes Act, which provided a means for victims of domestic abuse to lawfully terminate their lease, and using this information I was able to negotiate with her landlord and in the end he released her from the lease without either party bringing an action to court.

In another case, a client was arrested for charges that were later nolle prossed after her accuser admitted that he lied. However, proceeding only on the arrest record, the local Housing Authority sent our client a letter stating that they were going to terminate her from the Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program. The letter from the Housing Authority cited only the arrest. I went down to the Housing Authority's office and found that they had no record that the charges had been nolle prossed. I was able to obtain the court records from the courthouse and

get police records by submitting a Freedom of Information Act Request, and I submitted these documents along with a letter explaining our client's situation to the Housing Authority to enter into their record in preparation for our client's termination hearing. After receiving these documents and before the termination hearing, the Housing Authority contacted us and our client to inform us that they were reversing their termination, and that the hearing would be cancelled and our client would be allowed to keep her voucher.

Having completed one year of law school, and now having completed my first internship, the legal system can still seem daunting at times. But for our clients whom have no legal training, the system can be incredibly intimidating, confusing, and in many cases seemingly hopeless. Our clients come to us at a very difficult time in their lives, and I am happy that through my work this summer I was able to relieve them of some of their burdens.

Anthony Wadas  
Loyola University of Chicago  
Class of 2017



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August 3, 2015

Dan Ruben  
Executive Director  
Equal Justice America

*Sent by Email*

Re: EJA Fellowship Summer 2015- Anthony Wadas

Mr. Ruben,

My name is Marqus A. Cole, and I had the pleasure of supervising Anthony Wadas' during his summer fellowship at Prairie State Legal Services, Inc. We are a large legal aid firm that serves suburban and rural communities in Central and Northern Illinois. Mr. Wadas spent his summer under my direct legal supervision, as well as working independently and with other staff members.

Mr. Wadas successfully completed his summer internship. He was involved in all aspects of representation of clients in civil matters. Mr. Wadas' exposure to the law included: client intake, case assignment, case development and strategy, research, legal writing, field investigations, administrative hearings, court observation and communication with opposing parties.

One particular highlight of Mr. Wadas' summer was conducting a direct examination during an administrative hearing at a housing authority hearing. He elicited testimony from a witness that proved to be pivotal in the hearing officer's determination of the facts. The hearing officer ruled in our favor and we were able to preserve a Housing Choice Voucher for a client and keep her housed.

Mr. Wadas spent a significant portion of his summer refining his research and investigation skills. He came to the internship with skills that allowed him to research legal issues and review case law. During the course of the summer, he added the ability to investigate factual matters to develop legal theories in more detail. Examples of this activity include: initiation and reviewing Freedom of Information Act requests, reviewing court records and documents, reviewing documents produced by clients and investigating administrative agency

files. Throughout the summer, Mr. Wadas became more confident in requesting and demanding information, reviewing information and synthesizing that information with his legal research.

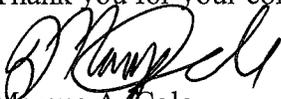
Lastly, Mr. Wadas spent a significant amount of time in direct client interaction. Initially he observed client intake with various staff members. During the course of the summer he steadily progressed to the point of conducting client intake on his own and providing legal advice at the direction of a supervising attorney. I believe that Mr. Wadas was able to find his own "voice" and style as the summer progressed and he became more comfortable with the areas of law he came across.

Due to the nature of my position, Mr. Wadas had the added difficulty, and benefit, of being exposed to a wide breadth of legal areas. It was difficult to master any one area of law, because often time my case load reflects the wide array of legal problems individuals experiencing homelessness face. However, Mr. Wadas was up to the task and never out of his depths.

I believe that Mr. Wadas was a highly effective intern, and the Fellowship provided the type of learning experience that the class room can not mirror. Mr. Wadas was able to adapt some of the tools he learned in school to the practical, hands on, practice of law. Hopefully, he feels confident in his experiences, and is able to connect how legal theory and case law work in the real world.

We appreciate the opportunity that Equal Justice America provided to both Mr. Wadas and PSLS.

Thank you for your commitment to advocacy,



Marqus A. Cole  
Staff Attorney