



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Alexa Chryssovergis

Law School: Boston University School of Law

Organization: Greater Boston Legal Services

Week of June 15th

I am honored to have been awarded a Fellowship at Equal Justice America this summer for my work at Greater Boston Legal Services, a legal aid organization in Boston that every year assists more than 10,000 low-income families and individuals with their civil legal problems. I started my 1L year at Boston University School of Law with a strong conviction that I wanted to do public interest work, but only vague ideas about how to pursue that avenue. Legal aid is an area of law that is never oversaturated with legal representation, because the need is so great. I have been working in the Elder, Health, and Disability Unit on mostly Social Security matters, and have also been helping out with the recent deluge of unemployment claims that have flooded our office, as COVID-19 has sent the economy into a recession. As of late, I have noted that I am lucky to work at a place where our staff does not shy away from having tough conversations about what we should be doing to fight racism. Systemic racism disproportionately impacts our clients; we must do our best for them to uproot systems and rebuild them in a way that works for everyone—not just a select few.

Week of July 6th

I have been working at Greater Boston Legal Services for more than a month now — time flies on Zoom! The best part of my internship so far has been being able to connect with my clients. I remember when my Lawyering Skills instructor at Boston University School of Law impressed upon her 1L students how critical it would be to show kindness to our clients, who would often be going through one of the toughest times of their lives when we represented them. My clients at GBLS rely heavily, and sometimes wholly, on disability benefits in order to make ends meet. I am working on two overpayment cases right now where my clients simply cannot afford to pay back a benefit overpayment that was likely not even their fault. Naturally, the matter is causing both of them a burdensome amount of stress. I am glad I have the opportunity to talk to them on a regular basis, give them updates on their case, and simply be someone for them to talk to as they are enduring a tough situation. These are challenging times



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LEGAL SERVICES FELLOWSHIPS

economically for many people, and especially for the clients at GBLS. I'm grateful to be working at an organization that does all it can to help those in dire need.

Week of July 27th

It's hard to believe I have less than two weeks left at Greater Boston Legal Services this summer. One of the most valuable parts of working for a legal aid organization is the vast array of expertise held by the many members of GBLS's network. I have attended trainings on so many different areas of law relevant to legal aid work and am grateful for the opportunity to be introduced to many different types of law. I love getting a glimpse into the different projects of my peers. Additionally, being in the classroom is fine, but I feel as if I learn much better in actual practice. I prefer the tangible, on-the-go learning experience as I communicate with clients and work through their problems in real time. Because of this, I'm excited to continue assisting GBLS's clients through the Access to Justice clinical program at Boston University School of Law starting in the fall. I'm thrilled I'll continue to learn and grow through experiential learning and will still be able to work in tandem with GBLS, a fabulous legal aid group that does incredible work for its clients. Thanks again to Equal Justice America for the opportunity to be a summer fellow.

Week of August 10th

My time with Greater Boston Legal Services has come to a close this summer, and I'm beyond grateful for the opportunity that Equal Justice America has given me to participate in their Fellowship this summer. I'm also grateful for everything GBLS did this summer to make the interns feel welcomed, and to ensure a positive and robust learning experience for us all, although the internships were fully remote. Little things made a big difference, such as having the interns present on a case we were working on during a staff meeting because we would not get the normal opportunities to practice our oral advocacy skills due to the pandemic.

This summer, I have learned how to properly interview and counsel clients; I have learned a great deal about an entirely new (and complex) area of law; and I have learned about the pure goodness and tenacity of my peers in legal aid work. I'm excited to return to Boston University School of Law in a couple short weeks to continue working toward my goals!