



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:

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School: Boston University

Organization: Harvard Law School Legal Services Center

Week of June 15th

I am delighted to be a fellow at Equal Justice America and here is a brief update on what I've been doing. I've been summering at WilmerHale Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School, specifically working in the Veterans Justice Project (VJP) clinic. VJP represents under-served veteran communities, e.g., veterans with mental health needs, medical disabilities, defending LGBTQ rights, and representing all legal issues arising out of the veteran's time in and/or after their military service.

Currently, I'm working on a reply brief at the VA Court of Appeals, advocating on behalf of a transgender veteran. In short, the VA hastily took away her educational benefits without proper due process or due diligence. In addition to this case, I'm doing research on the VA's Fugitive Felon Program, which I will discuss in a later update.

Week of June 23rd

This past week I've learned that the reply brief I'm working on could set new precedents. There aren't many cases regarding the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program. This program is designed to help disabled veterans transition into the civilian world and find meaningful employment. Currently, I am drafting the reply brief, advocating that our clients VR&E entitlement has been unjustly revoked. Because VA did not follow proper regulatory obligations, I believe that we have a strong chance to find relief for our client and maybe set new precedents for future veterans dealing with similar situations!

Week of July 6th

I realized the process of litigation could be extremely long. Our client has been fighting this case for the past three years and we are coming down to the final weeks to submit our final draft. I think we are making great progress and hopefully we can provide some relief. Additionally, I have been working on the VA Fugitive Felon Program. This program is designed to help veterans that have lost their benefits, e.g., disability, medical, etc.,



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because they were convicted for a felony. The issue arises when veterans were “convicted” for a felony, but the charges are either dismissed or later reduced to a misdemeanor. I am trying to find a pattern of when and how the VA places the veteran under the Fugitive Felon status and if there is a pattern of discriminatory practice.

Week of August 20th

Thank you all for following my journey this summer and donating to EJA! I truly appreciate it. My internship here ended on July 31. I’ve learned a tremendous amount about the litigation process. More importantly, I learned many of the struggles veterans face correlates to one’s socio-economic status, mental health issues, and unfortunately their gender & identity. The veteran community is not much different from the civilian sector insofar as veterans deal with the same issues mentioned above. I believe places like the Harvard Law School’s Legal Services are necessary to bring light to these issues but also help advocate for change through the practice of law. I realized changing a law or policy takes time, but I believe the work we do in the non-profit sector is vital to create the change we want to see in this world. EJA recognizes this and I am fortunate to be part of their fellowship. I hope to continue my legal journey to help others and try to make a positive impact for the next generation.