



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1: A few weeks ago, I started my legal internship with the Public Benefits Unit at Legal Aid. Through my internship, I am learning a significant amount about different public benefits programs and the systemic issues that make it difficult for marginalized communities to obtain benefits they need and deserve.

So far, my favorite part about my internship has been speaking to clients. In their stories, I see my family's own story. Each day, I am reminded of why I chose to go to law school: to empower other families whose struggles are not too different from my family's own struggles. Although emotionally overwhelming at times, my conversations with clients motivate me to continue pursuing a career in direct services.

Legal direct services work is extremely crucial work. Attorneys in direct services make complicated legal systems easier for individuals to navigate. Most importantly, direct services provide an opportunity to uplift communities that are often overlooked and ignored. I've learned that the smallest or simplest legal support can have a tremendous impact on the lives of individuals. As I continue my internship at Legal Aid, I look forward to strengthening my legal knowledge and skills to become an avid advocate for marginalized communities.

Update 2: I can't believe I'm already halfway through my internship with the Public Benefits Unit at the Legal Aid Society of DC. My time so far has been rewarding and meaningful.

This past week I assisted a client with his unemployment case. Although he's been reaching out to the unemployment office for the past year, he hasn't had any luck. When we called together, we were quickly able to get answers. We may not have resolved his case, but we were able to figure out next steps. The client couldn't thank me enough for having assisted him with the call. Hopefully, we'll be able to get him his benefits soon enough.

This was a great reminder of how frustrating it can be to navigate the system alone. Even if it's just advocating on a phone call, lawyers can make a significant difference.



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Update 3: Since my last post, I have assisted many more clients with a variety of issues. In the Public Benefits Unit at the Legal Aid Society of DC, attorneys provide legal representation with unemployment, SNAP, TANF, and social security claims. However, when attorneys are unable to provide representation, they make an effort to provide clients with helpful legal advice. This often requires directly reaching out to agencies to request more information about a client's case.

As a legal intern, I have been able to draft requests for several clients. Although it takes quite a bit of time to hear back, these requests make a significant difference. We often receive information that help attorneys provide clients with crucial advice on how to approach their cases. Even though some clients may call agencies on a weekly basis to request this information, they are never given accurate information.

By advocating for them, even if it is just to obtain more information about their cases, clients are able to get answers. These requests go a long way as attorneys are able to effectively guide clients to resolve their cases. In a complicated system, the simplest action can have a major impact on a client's life. I am reminded of this every time I write a request. As I continue my internship, I hope to continue playing a role in these small victories.

Update 4: As I approach the end of my internship at, I am glad to see positive outcomes from some of the cases I have been working on. From advocating for clients' benefits to be reinstated to addressing discrepancies in applications, there have been many wins over the last few weeks. Although the wait can be frustrating, it is always exciting to share good news with clients. For these clients, public benefits are an essential means of survival. Public benefits provide a safety net for many families in DC. To play even the smallest role in assisting clients obtain their benefits is rewarding.

Update 5: A little over two weeks ago, I finished my internship in the Public Benefits Unit at the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia. Throughout my time at Legal Aid, I learned about the various legal advocacy methods that can be approached in unemployment, TANF, SNAP, and social security disability claims. Although complex, and at times frustrating, these methods are all crucial as they help ensure individuals are receiving the public benefits they are entitled to. As I continue to engage in public interest work, I look forward to applying all the knowledge and skills I gained in the Public Benefits Unit.

My favorite part about my summer internship was directly working with clients. Through my clients and their stories, I gained a deeper understanding about the social issues many DC residents face on a daily basis. Each day, my interactions with clients served as a reminder of why I decided to pursue a career in public interest. I will carry with me the connections I made with clients for the rest of my career. They will always serve as motivation to continue fighting against injustice and discovering better ways to empower communities most in need.

I would like to thank Equal Justice America for all their support this summer. My time at Legal Aid would not have been possible without them. If you would like to support future fellows, please consider donating.