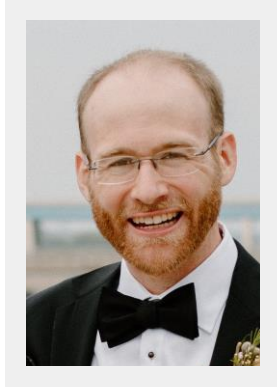




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Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



Name: Wilson Baer

Law School: Brooklyn Law School

Organization: Lawyers for Children

Update 1: I have settled into my summer internship after my first week with Lawyers for Children and I am very excited about the work that I will be doing this summer. Lawyers for Children provides representation for children in various proceedings in New York City including protective, custody, and delinquency. Our first week was spent primarily learning about the work that Lawyers for Children does and the various projects that exist within the organization. We learned how the organization helps children who are aging out of the foster care system, connects children with mental health supports, provides educational advocacy, and more. Beyond our many trainings, I spent much of my time working with the organization's delinquency attorney with whom I will be spending much of my summer. We received a few delinquency petitions during the week and with each one that came in I sat with my mentor attorney to discuss how we would proceed. These first conversations mostly focused on analyzing whether the petitions were facially sufficient and how to respond to them at the initial hearings. Additionally, I sat in on some client outreach and began to prepare for a court appearance later this week. I am excited to be working for such a great organization and I can't wait to support children in need all summer.

Update 2: As the summer has moved along, I have gotten deeper into the work of Lawyers for Children. We have had a few more trainings covering topics such as direct/cross examinations, appellate advocacy, and supporting LGBTQIA+ clients. Beyond the trainings, however, I have been able to impact cases directly. When delinquency petitions against our clients have come in, I have met with my supervisor to discuss those petitions and on finding flaws, I have provided research into how to challenge those petitions. Beyond just providing research support, I have begun having real client interaction and representation in the courtroom. From initial courtroom appearances to probation intake interviews, I have been able to advocate for and protect clients so that they don't face the juvenile justice system alone. On multiple occasions I have advocated for preferable outcomes for clients, diverting them from a track that would end up at a trial and have been successful in those actions. In order to do all of that, however, I have met with clients to build relationships with them. I have



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gotten to know them as people and built an understanding of their ideal outcomes. Lawyering is all about building relationships and I have been getting prime experience in that arena.

Update 3: In the past couple of weeks I have continued to engage in client outreach while also spending time observing various court hearings. As the client engagement has continued, I have been able to develop more meaningful relationships instead of just checking in about a couple of points here and there. I am able to follow up on concerns and check in on matters that go beyond the client's legal matter. In this way, I am not only gathering information necessary to representing the client but also building trust in a way that will allow me to provide better representation. Creating such familiarity and trust will allow me to be a successful public interest attorney and I feel lucky to have such strong experience in it this summer. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to observe a broad mix of hearings. While much has been in the realm of delinquency, I have also observed various other intersections of juveniles and the law. Whether it is hearings regarding family regulation, intimate partner violence, or more, Lawyers for Children has afforded me the opportunity to see how attorneys can support children. I want to help children as widely as possible in my career, and so it is important to learn all of the ways that I can provide assistance.

Update 4: Much of the work of a lawyer, public interest lawyers included, comes in the form of quick hearings and preliminary matters. The image presented to us by television and movies of an attorney questioning witnesses, though exciting, is not terribly common. This week, however, I got to watch that. I got to observe direct and cross-examination of witnesses. Even if it is not common, it remains a major part of the work of many direct services attorneys. As much as doing the work has been valuable this summer, I have also relished the opportunities to observe the work. In conversations with my supervisor both before and after these examinations, I was able to learn and understand more deeply the strategies and planning that go into that work. It all is what has been building to give me a strong foundation for my career as I move forward. In addition to observations, I got a little taste of appellate work these past two weeks. I volunteered to help my organization's main appellate attorney with a threshold question for a new appeal, whether the matter was even fit for appeal. Even if I don't see myself working in the appellate field, it was still very helpful to take the time to research the avenues and authorizations for appeals.

Update 5: As my summer has come to a close and I turn towards post-graduate plans, I find myself reflecting on my entire journey to and through law school. Prior to law school, I spent several years in education, both in the classroom and as assistant director of a summer camp. All of those years spent working with children directly inspired both my desire to come to law school and my plans for life as an attorney. From working with and getting to know my students I came to recognize the challenges that they faced in their life that were beyond my ability to help as a teacher. So, I came to law school hoping to help kids. I spent last summer at The Legal Aid Society's Juvenile Rights Practice in New York City. I supported attorneys working with children in both delinquency and protective matters. I loved that work and for me it was a confirmation of what I want to do moving forward. Going into this summer I knew that I wanted to continue pursuing this work and I was



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thrilled to get the opportunity to do so with Lawyers for Children. Having done the same work last summer, I was able to get right down to work this summer. While there was still material and procedures to learn, I knew the basics and so could be helpful right away. As I handled the various assignments that were passed my way, I felt more and more excited to pursue this field in the future. I continued to see firsthand the struggles that children face in New York City. I also got to see the reality that people don't often trust children to make the right decisions for themselves. In completing delinquency work I got to see judgmental prosecutors make assumptions about my clients. I saw some judges who were more forgiving than others in giving defendants rehabilitative chances. I got to watch my supervisor passionately advocate for our clients and work through every possibility to gain a favorable outcome for them. Also, in a facet unique to juvenile delinquency work as opposed to adult public defense, I saw the critical role that parents can play. I saw parents who were engaged and looking to support their children in the supports they received from probation. I saw parents who lashed out at their children. I saw parents who felt like they needed help themselves. Summer is an interesting time to work with kids, school being out and families going on vacation, and that sometimes made outreach hard. But in the end, I saw clients and families who wanted to work to be better. That didn't look the same across the board and there was more reluctance with some clients than others, but engagement was the goal and it was generally achieved. I recognize that my life has looked different from many of my clients, but that didn't mean that I couldn't strive for that engagement to convey that I wanted to help. I went in every day looking to build relationships and help those clients and I am excited to continue that work throughout my career.