



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Jennifer Seidman

**Law School:** Cornell Law School

**Organization:** The Legal Aid Society – Brooklyn  
Neighborhood Office, Housing Unit

---

**Update 1:** This summer, I am working as a Legal Intern in the Housing Practice of the Legal Aid Society in the Brooklyn Neighborhood Office. The Housing Unit is dedicated to assisting New York City's most vulnerable families and individuals by promoting housing stability and preventing homelessness.

During my internship this summer, I am working alongside Legal Aid attorneys as they defend individuals and families facing eviction in housing court, enforce housing maintenance code, and effectuate repairs. I have already begun some of this meaningful work and I look forward to continuing the rest of this summer!

---

**Update 2:** One thing I've appreciated about the Legal Aid Society Housing Unit is that the folks working here do much more for our clients than just dealing with their housing-court case. For example, over the past couple of weeks, I have worked with several clients on getting access to public benefits that they didn't know they were eligible for. Getting benefits for someone facing eviction can have a huge impact on their ability to pay rent or find a new apartment.

---

**Update 3:** Last week I helped with the intake process in housing court. Intake is where the legal-service providers meet with tenants facing eviction and assess whether they are income eligible for free representation under the "Universal Access" law, also known as "right-to-counsel" (RTC). While RTC for eviction proceedings sounds like a great thing, in practice it doesn't work like RTC for criminal proceedings.

Instead, the court can still calendar eviction cases, even if all the legal-service providers are at capacity. Additionally, the income limit is very low. The cost of living in NYC is so high that folks who aren't eligible for RTC still can't afford a private attorney. There is such a need for eviction-defense attorneys, which is why I'm proud to be working alongside them this summer! In addition to more attorneys, we need better laws and policies to assist individuals facing homelessness.



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

---

**Update 4:** Today is my last day at my internship. I can't believe the summer passed so quickly! This week I have been calling clients that I worked with to let them know that I am leaving. It was really touching to hear how much the clients valued our interactions and the help that I was able to provide.

I am so grateful to The Legal Aid Society, Equal Justice America, and Cornell Law School for my great experience this summer, and I am excited to continue this work when I graduate next year! Please consider supporting Equal Justice America.

---

**Update 5:** Reflecting back on my summer internship with Legal Aid Society—Brooklyn Neighborhood Office, Housing Unit, I feel very grateful to have had the opportunities I did! Over the summer, I was able to do substantive legal work, including drafting answers in a nonpayment proceeding and a holdover proceeding, and a motion to dismiss.

In addition, where I think that I was able to make the most impact was through my direct client interactions and public benefits work. One of our clients hadn't had any income for over a year. During my internship, I was able to assist her in signing up for Public Assistance and SNAP. Seeing the relief that she had just by getting a small amount of regular income was very humbling. I feel so grateful for the fantastic mentors I had at The Legal Aid Society, as well as for the support I received from Equal Justice America, and Cornell Law School. Please consider supporting Equal Justice America.