



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: Lincoln Square Legal Services – Family Advocacy Clinic

Update 1: I am officially one week into my Research Assistantship with Fordham University School of Law's Family Advocacy Clinic! I have been primarily spending time on one of the Clinic's cases preparing for trial and have already learned so much more about legal research, search queries, reading statutes, and summarizing case law. I am excited to glean a deeper understanding of this case and the law at issue as the weeks progress!

Update 2: I am two weeks into my research assistantship with Fordham's Family Advocacy Clinic and it's going wonderfully. I've been continuing to support the Clinic Director in preparing one of the Clinic's cases for trial, which has primarily included checking the opposing counsel's cited case law, finding support for counter arguments, and most recently, drafting a reply brief. I am so glad to have this opportunity this summer.

Update 3: Last week my supervisor shared that our client prevailed over opposing counsel's motion to dismiss our claim. This was fantastic to hear and felt so rewarding because I have become truly invested in our client's cause of action and now feel very familiar with the legal issues and arguments. My supervisor used my reply brief as an outline for her to write the final response, which was also wonderful to know that my research directly helped our client. This week I have transitioned into doing research for a report my supervisor is writing about the "New Jane Crow" - how racism in the Child Welfare System disproportionately separates Brown and Black families. I have specifically been asked to find studies and articles about how legal players themselves (lawyers, judges, friends of the court) contribute to this phenomenon. I am excited to be starting this new project and learn about another area of family law!

Update 4: Since my last update, I have continued to help my supervisor find sources about how lawyers, judges, and friends of the court contribute to racism and the "New Jane Crow" in the child welfare system—that is, Black and Brown families being disproportionately separated in child welfare cases. Later this week I plan to expand my research to case law that has discussed these topics in the opinion. I look forward to learning more about this important topic and contributing to my supervisor's report.



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Update 5: In the final weeks of my research assistantship, I have continued to brief case law that discusses how the court system and court actors contribute to and/or exacerbate racism within the child welfare system. Specifically, I have focused on a set of cases from the early 2000s where the plaintiffs (a group of parents whose children were taken from them by CWS) allege constitutional violations under 1a, 4a, 9a, 13a, and 14a, as well as violations of NY state law. I also analyzed the defenses brought by the government and the court's opinion. This appears to be a primary source that discusses this issue, so I am hopeful my supervisor will be able to use my briefing to help with her report.

As my summer employment with Lincoln Square Legal Services' Family Advocacy Clinic comes to an end, I reflect on how fruitful of an experience this has been. In the beginning of the summer, when I was assisting with an active clinic case concerning a student's access to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), I had my first experience drafting a legal document outside of a classroom setting. I crafted arguments concerning procedural concepts I learned about during 1L, like the statute of limitations and ripeness, as well as substantive policy arguments surrounding education law. The process of parsing through case law and knowing my work was affecting a real client was incredibly meaningful and inspired me to develop a real connection with the work I was completing.

In the latter half of the summer, when I was helping my supervisor conduct research for a report she is writing, I had the opportunity to conduct legal research outside of case law. I worked with my law school's librarian to search for newspaper and academic articles discussing the topic of the report and enjoyed reading about this important topic of the New Jane Crow from the perspectives of institutional actors other than lawyers and judges.

I look forward to taking the substantive concepts I have learned this summer, as well as the research and analytical skills I have developed, with me into my 2L year. I believe I am now a more confident legal writer and researcher and look forward to hopefully participating in the Family Advocacy Clinic again during this school year or next.