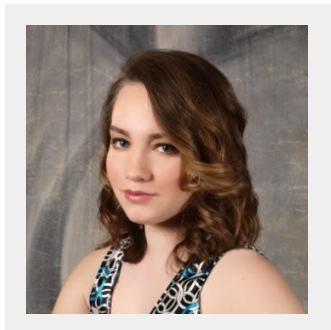




EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: Legal Aid Society of DC

Update 1: Hi everyone! My first few weeks with the Legal Aid Society of DC's Public Benefits Unit have absolutely flown by and I have had so many opportunities to help people navigate complex systems and difficult situations. I have interviewed clients preparing appeals of denial or rescission of benefits, assisted attorneys representing clients at hearings, and conducted research on legal and factual questions to help Legal Aid's clients.

I have been struck by how difficult it is to understand and successfully navigate public benefit programs and processes – even for someone who has spent two years in law school. I frequently help clients understand long documents with complicated legal writing or wait on hold for more than an hour with clients trying to get basic information from a company or agency. These experiences have highlighted for me the importance of access to legal services for low-income claimants.

Update 2: Hi everyone! I am somehow already more than halfway through my internship with the Legal Aid Society of DC's Public Benefits Unit. I have learned so much and had many opportunities to work closely with clients and applicants facing overlapping and interconnected public benefits issues.

I continue to be amazed by the strength and resilience of the people and communities that Legal Aid serves. Just recently, I spoke to a client who is facing multiple public benefits issues of her own but still made sure to ask me to share information with other Legal Aid clients about upcoming community resource programming that might be helpful to them. It is incredibly inspiring to work with members of the DC community, both staff and clients, who are so focused on helping and supporting others.

Update 3: Hi everyone! I am now in the last two weeks of my internship with the Legal Aid Society of DC's Public Benefits Unit. I have learned so much and had many opportunities to work closely with clients and applicants facing overlapping and interconnected public benefits issues. I have also recently had several



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opportunities to engage more in Legal Aid's systemic advocacy and policy work. I have edited and checked citations in briefs submitted to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, attended public hearings held by the D.C. Council, and participated in meetings discussing the policy goals of Legal Aid and partner organizations. The opportunity to better understand how Legal Aid's client-facing work informs their policy and systemic advocacy work and how these parallel efforts interact to help Legal Aid's clients has been incredibly enriching.

Update 4: Hi everyone! Today is my last day with the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia. I have learned so much and had many opportunities to work closely with clients and applicants facing overlapping and interconnected public benefits issues. I have also really enjoyed working on Legal Aid's systemic advocacy as a compliment to my direct services work. Overall, I have had a truly excellent and enriching experience this summer, and I am so grateful for the advice and support that everyone has shared along the way.

Update 5: Following the conclusion of my summer with the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia's Public Benefits Unit, I want to thank everyone who helped to support and encourage me along the way and the whole team at Legal Aid dedicating their time and energy to helping members of the DC community.

This summer, I interviewed clients preparing appeals of denial or rescission of benefits, assisted attorneys representing clients at hearings, and conducted research on legal and factual questions to help Legal Aid's clients. I also had several opportunities to engage more in Legal Aid's systemic advocacy and policy work. I edited and checked citations in briefs submitted to the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, attended public hearings held by the D.C. Council, and participated in meetings discussing the policy goals of Legal Aid and partner organizations. Though I was frustrated by the complexity of the many administrative processes and mistakes our clients had to navigate, I was constantly amazed and encouraged by the resilience and strength of the people I had the honor to meet this summer. Working at Legal Aid taught me so much about working directly with clients and about further emphasized the necessity of working with affected communities when approaching systemic advocacy and policy initiatives. I will carry these skills and lesson forward in my work in health policy this fall and in civil rights litigation next spring.