



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: Kids in Need of Defense

Update 1: This week marks my third week as a Legal Intern at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND) and as an Equal Justice America Fellow. KIND has provided thorough training opportunities for me to learn about their different areas of work. This training has been incredibly helpful in preparing me for my summer assignments. In this short time, I've already learned a great deal about the challenges that children face in both family court and immigration court. For instance, children from the Northern Triangle may undergo a longer process to gain lawful permanent resident status than children from many other countries because visa eligibility and wait time vary by country. With so much uncertainty, I appreciate that KIND also offers social services to their clients because it provides a much more holistic approach to safeguarding children's best interests and helping them achieve their individual goals. I admire the staff members at KIND for their clear commitment to protecting the rights of children and I look forward to learning more in the coming weeks!

Update 2: Since my last update, I've had several exciting opportunities at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). First and foremost, I was able to attend a family law hearing for a client to obtain the predicate order to apply for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJ). It was incredibly rewarding to meet the client and see how deeply affected they were by a positive ruling. Additionally, I've started drafting a brief for a similar matter. It's been great to work with my supervisors and others in the office to see the different types of cases that KIND takes on and the unique challenges they have. To that end, I've also been working on a few research projects to track how the Third Circuit treats certain immigration cases and on human rights conditions in various clients' home countries. I look forward to continuing these projects and taking on new ones in the coming weeks!

Update 3: The past two weeks have come with several new experiences at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). I've continued working on country conditions research and researching Third Circuit case law. I've also had the opportunity to develop legal arguments for a brief, arguing for a client to obtain the predicate order for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status. In addition, I volunteered at the KIND Summer Festival. It was incredibly rewarding to help with this event because it served clients and their families outside of the office. Food and games were provided for attendees as well as face paint and tie dye stations. I love how strong the social services team is at KIND because I feel it is an integral part of supporting clients and helping them feel a sense of



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belonging in a new community. Legal services are an essential component of client success, but holistic lawyering goes beyond achieving legal goals and partnerships with social services can go a long way. The hard work and collaboration across the office makes me happy to be spending my summer at KIND.

Update 4: Over the past few weeks at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND), I've worked on several exciting initiatives. I attended another family court hearing, finished writing a brief for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, started an affidavit for asylum, and I am creating guidance for pro bono attorneys. In addition, I attended several staff meetings where I learned more about the work that different KIND staff members do and the challenges they face. Being part of these meetings has offered great insight into what it looks like to work as an immigration attorney. Relatedly, there was also a session where several KIND staff members shared their paths to becoming immigration attorneys, or why they chose to go another direction. It was great to hear reflections and advice from KIND professionals as I develop my own path.

Update 5: It's bittersweet to have wrapped up my summer internship at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). The past ten weeks have flown by, but they've been filled with valuable experiences that I will take with me going forward. KIND provided great support for their interns by starting the summer with thorough training opportunities. We had a variety of learning resources available to us to ensure we were prepared for our assignments and could find additional support when needed.

During my ten weeks, I was exposed to a variety of projects. I was able to join two family court hearings seeking predicate orders for Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS). Fortunately, both had favorable rulings, giving the clients more security and sending them on the path toward citizenship. Additionally, I had the opportunity to interview a client and draft their brief for asylum. This was a unique experience because I hadn't interviewed a minor before and it is quite different than working with an adult. As expected, I also had many opportunities to hone my reading and writing skills by drafting briefs, proposed orders, country conditions research, and other research tasks specific to my supervisors' cases. Outside of these assignments, I also volunteered at KIND's Summer Festival where I got to see clients in an informal setting and help provide them and their families with a fun experience. Knowing how challenging and stressful the legal system can be, I feel this work is an essential component to holistically support KIND clients and I am grateful to have been able to help.

In addition to supporting their clients, I felt KIND did a great job supporting their staff. During my time, I participated in few all-staff meetings, each of which included a wellness activity. KIND also offers "Wellness Fridays" which allowed for some well-deserved time off. The nature of the work that KIND does can be draining, so it is especially important to take time for wellness.

In my career, I hope to continue this type of work and my experience at KIND is one I will certainly reflect back on. It will be a challenge to match the supportive work environment I found here. I sincerely hope to return to KIND one day or to work at an organization that shares KIND's values. I see the barriers that our immigration system poses, and I hope I'm able to play even a small part in breaking down some of those barriers and helping clients move past them.