



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1:

Finished my first client intake on my starting week. Client withheld rent because his apartment was not inhabitable during covid lockdown. In class we did talk about implied warranty of habitability, but in real life it hits differently. Especially during covid, when a person's home is not only his castle but his career battleground, his entertainment hub, his gym, and of course his last sanctuary. Inhabitability is not an easy story to hear generally and even worse when his story is not alone. I appreciate ERAP more and more recently. Research side, last week I mainly focused on New York intestacy statutes. Even though there's that saying that everybody is born alone and dies alone...it's actually really hard to deal with either birth or death alone. It was my first contact with trust & estate laws & regulations and I find it relevant and fascinating. I really appreciate my attorney's thoughtful and challenging questions. Hopefully I will learn more this week.

Update 2:

This past week my work mainly revolves around contacting clients. Working with the elderly is more complicated than I thought, and I somehow loved it for that. It's not only the legal aspect of the client's situation that we care the most about. Their safety and quality of life play a more important role in evaluating everything. For a remote notarization, the client has no access to a printer, scanner, laptop, or smart devices, so we contacted her nearest bank and arranged transportation for her. It may seem straightforward, but it took us four hours to set up the whole process considering her age, her disability, and her lack of caring-taking family members. I developed a huge respect for my colleagues during the process. From my past care-taking experiences I know, you won't notice the details if you don't care enough. I think what I learned in the past week in this particular field of legal service were: be more proactive and patient, provide more updates and err on the side of over-explaining.



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Update 3:

August 26th was my last day working with JASA Legal Service for Elder Justice. I can't believe how fast this summer has passed. I'm very grateful for the opportunity I had this summer to intern with JASA. I was able to develop my legal research skills, especially in a jurisdiction where I want to practice after graduation, and I worked directly for the first time with elder clients and also with the family court.

Since my last update, I finished drafting a client letter reminding her of the court appearance date; I have been maintaining our housing court case-tracking list and doing intakes with several new clients; I got notified by the court that Judge decided one of the oppositions motions my supervisor and I had worked on.

I spent a lot of my summertime researching New York laws of estates, intestacy, and property rights. It was very interesting for me to learn about how different jurisdictions approach the same legal question differently, with regard to both substantive and procedural law. Apart from researching, I particularly found direct interactions with clients and court clerks to be very useful in improving my communication skills. Although it is challenging to get a full picture of someone's situation when they are distraught and lacking resources, I've developed a better understanding of and renewed respect for legal aids' role in this process.

I wish I had more time working with JASA. Apart from their amazing work, talking with the attorneys alone was an intellectually stimulating experience. I will take trusts and estates law class in the coming semester thanks to my new-found interest this summer. Most clients I talked to had a relative who died without a will. They found the inheritance process complicated and intimidating, especially when they had to raise a claim against a family member. I hope I'll be able to explain complicated estate statutes in plain and simple language for them in the future or help elder clients plan for their wealth distribution beforehand and ease the pain for their family members.

I am incredibly grateful to have support from Equal Justice America to make my summer legal internship possible. The need for civil legal aid is urgent.