



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Law School: Temple University Beasley School of Law

Organization: AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania

Update 1: This summer, I accepted an internship with the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania and I'm incredibly grateful to have been offered a fellowship with Equal Justice America to help fund my summer work. To that end, I'd like to share with you all my first EJA Fellow Update !

In the first two weeks of my internship, I have been learning A LOT! The Law Project serves communities and individuals impacted by HIV in a myriad of ways including their largest service areas of housing and public benefits, as well discrimination law, estate planning, and employment. Much of my first couple weeks has consisted of training and case review in each area so I can learn more and better support clients. The Law Project also supports trans individuals in the process of legally changing their name, a smaller portion of their services in which I've already been able to participate, which is incredibly rewarding.

I look forward to learning a lot and serving these communities throughout my summer. Stay tuned for more updates in the coming weeks.

Update 2: As I continue through my summer internship, it's time for my next EJA Fellow Update !

One of the privileges of my internship with the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania is being able to serve clients in multiple areas of law. Through the past two weeks, I've been able to observe and contribute to services for clients in the area of immigration law.

Specifically, I've been working on a research project to assist a staff attorney and client in the client's application for asylum in the United States. Clients seeking asylum often do so because they are facing direct and violent political or social persecution in their home country, and leaving their home is the only way to keep themselves and their families safe. It has been incredible to help serve these very worthy clients and contribute to their safety and well-being in such significant ways.

Update 3: It's hard to believe I'm already more than halfway through my summer internship and it's time for my third EJA Fellow Update !



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Pride month may technically be over, but through my work at the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania this summer, I'm continuing to support and celebrate trans folks through the process of a legal name change. The Law Project partners with many organizations in Philadelphia to specifically support those with increased financial and support needs, removing the financial barriers to the legal name change process. Throughout the summer so far, I've been able to assist with a few legal name changes, and while I am not yet certified to officially represent these clients, this is an area of legal work where I can take the lead in interacting with clients, drafting and filing petitions and orders, conducting judgment searches, and ultimately getting someone's legal name changed to accurately reflect their identity.

While this is a smaller area of practice for the Law Project, it is so rewarding and exciting to help individuals through the process to having their identity fully recognized and respected!

Update 4: I'm almost to the end of my 10-week internship with the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania and recently I've had the opportunity to revisit some case law related to the research I completed for my undergraduate thesis. My thesis combined my philosophy and sociology majors in conducting an ethical and policy assessment of privatized health care in prison systems, arguing for policy changes which defended the dignity of incarcerated individuals and their right to healthcare.

My most recent research projects have me revisiting that subject area and exploring healthcare in some Pennsylvania prisons along with the intersection of healthcare and confidentiality, particularly for those with HIV. It's important to recognize how a stigmatized identity can negatively impact an individual's experience with healthcare professionals and their ability to receive care. Additionally, incarcerated individuals generally do not have the right to seek a second opinion beyond the prison-contracted doctor. This contributes to a lack of autonomy in determining their care and can leave individuals with unaddressed health needs and without alternatives.

The work of the AIDS Law Project is incredibly necessary and helpful in bringing attention to these issues and reducing these barriers, and I'm so grateful to be a part of that mission.

Update 5: A little over a week ago, my summer internship with the AIDS Law Project of Pennsylvania wrapped up so it's time for my final EJA Fellow Update.

After entering this internship with little experience in the legal profession, I can't believe how much I've learned in just 10-weeks. As I've mentioned before, the Law Project serves clients in a variety of areas from the largest practice areas of housing and public benefits to areas of law like immigration and legal name changes.

Throughout this summer I've gained experience in each of these areas. I reviewed court transcripts, briefed cases for research, and prepared affirmative defenses in family law cases. I researched country conditions to support the narrative of a client applying for asylum. I observed landlord-tenant court and assisted with cases where clients needed assistance with repairs, sought housing subsidies, or were facing eviction. Together with my fellow interns, I prepared a guide for practitioners and clients on navigating overpayment of Social Security benefits. I compiled guidance for trans individuals who are incarcerated and are seeking gender affirming care. And I researched health care in Pennsylvania prisons and learned more about the overlap between health care and confidentiality for individuals living with HIV.



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Through my summer work, I've had the opportunity to meet great people and serve well-deserving clients, most of whom are individuals living with HIV. While HIV is not as debilitating a diagnosis as it once was, and treatment has allowed many clients to have an undetectable status, the stigma surrounding HIV is still present and exacerbates the obstacles that low-income individuals face in society.

Getting the opportunity to work directly with clients has possibly helped my legal skills even more than the traditional research assignments. Understanding the important questions to ask, the nuances of your client's situation, goals, and values, and being able to effectively communicate legal issues and outcomes with someone outside of the legal field are incredible skills that I can't gain from a classroom setting.

I'm incredibly grateful to have had the opportunity to work at the AIDS Law Project, for the incredible people working there, and for the many opportunities for learning and growth this past summer. Thankfully, even though my summer work has concluded, I will continue working with the Law Project during the school year on the Jaci Adams Identity Initiative. Through this initiative, we are commemorating the life and legacy of Jaci Adams through the expansion of the Law Project's legal name change practice to support trans individuals in the Philadelphia area (you can visit the Law Project's website to learn more). Assisting with legal name changes was one of my favorite ongoing projects of the summer, and I'm eager to continue serving this population throughout the school year.

Finally, I want to extend my gratitude to Equal Justice America and Temple University Beasley School of Law for supporting this public interest internship. It was a great summer!