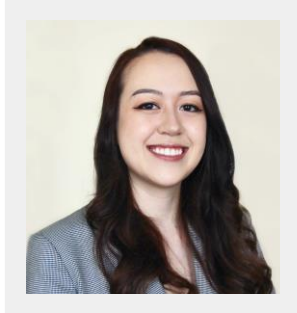




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Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: Mandel Legal Aid Clinic — Civil Rights & Police Accountability Project

Update 1: I'm delighted to be finishing up my second week with the Civil Rights and Police Accountability Project at the Edwin F. Mandel Legal Aid Clinic in Chicago! I'm working this summer on a number of projects: Collaborating with a coalition of attorneys to address gaps in search warrant reform through the Chicago Police Consent Decree, investigating paths forward on civil rights litigation for an incarcerated potential client, and, in partnership with advocacy initiative Zealous, interviewing attorneys and support staff in the Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender to gauge their attitudes towards advocacy outside the courtroom. On the heels of my 1L courses in Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure I, being able to see law and politics at work — both where it allows us to pursue police accountability and where it needs serious work — in such a short time has been both enlightening and daunting. I'm looking forward to a summer of rewarding (and at times frustrating!) work keeping police abuse from going unchecked, pursuing policy reform in our city, and supporting our public defenders.

Update 2: I recently had my first experience interviewing a potential client over the phone to complete the facts section of an internal memorandum. Picking up the phone and dialing the number was one of the more nerve-racking things I've had to do so far, as simple as it seems; I, like a lot of my peers who grew up texting instead of calling, have a bit of irrational anxiety about speaking on the phone with people. But even the short, friendly interaction I had with our potential client gave me a glimpse into who he is as a person rather than a description in a court transcript. It was nothing to be nervous about! I've also been able to meet the judge we're working with for the foreseeable future, interacted with current clients, interviewed local public defenders and their support staff about advocacy, and submitted my first piece of real legal writing. I'm grateful for this opportunity to overcome my hurdles, no matter how small they might seem in hindsight. These are just a few of the formative experiences I've been able to have for the first time through the Police Accountability Project.

Update 3: This week in the clinic, my co-intern and I, in collaboration with co-counsel, wrapped up a pretty lengthy letter to a judge about policy change recommendations falling under the CPD Consent Decree. We had done substantial research to support these recommendations and the feeling of submitting a final report for the



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first time was incredibly rewarding. I look forward to seeing the judge's feedback. I'm now focusing on the subject of my first memorandum submission: fleshing out the facts leading up to the present, despite the difficulty of obtaining appellate briefs and other submitted attorney work products from our potential client's original counsel, and digging in deeply to the facts of cases assessed in-circuit regarding potential loopholes to the statute of limitations on excessive force claims. We also concluded our interviews of Cook County Public Defenders and will be writing a report on our findings to help the office with policy recommendations on defender advocacy in the coming weeks. I feel incredibly fortunate to be learning from the many attorneys I have encountered during my internship.

Update 4: My time at the Civil Rights and Police Accountability Project has come to a (brief) close. I say brief because I'll be returning to the clinic, and hopefully to some of my ongoing projects, in the fall quarter. In my time here, I've worked with handfuls of clients on interrelated cases and projects, conducted a ton of legal research, sprinted to meet deadlines when they came rushing up, and learned something new from every person I've interacted with.

But I also come away knowing that the work I've done these past few weeks has barely scratched the surface. In the world of police accountability, especially in Chicago, two step forwards is often followed by a frustrating one step back. But in my time in the clinic, I have collaborated with some of the most spirited and passionate community organizers in the city: People who have been hurt, people who have risen up, people who demand change, and people who will not be silenced. I am honored to have spent my summer uplifting their voices and developing all of the legal tools on my belt to move forward with this work in the coming months. I'm so grateful to Equal Justice America and The University of Chicago Law School for this opportunity to learn and grow.

Update 5: I'm sharing my final EJA Fellow update, a reflection on all the work that I've been privileged to be involved with this summer. I combed through pages upon pages upon pages of documents, laws, and code to find the evidence we needed to advance our clients' policy changes in front of the city. I had to relearn what I'd been taught about writing internal memos to meet my professor's specific needs; it was a lesson in adaptability to realize that every boss will require something different from a memo, and what was taught in 1L legal writing isn't a template that works everywhere. I brushed up on my communications skills by interviewing public defenders and growing confident enough to adjust my questions from the template to each specific interviewee's experiences. I collaborated on a report to help shape policy changes in the Cook County Public Defender's office to advance their out-of-the-courtroom advocacy efforts. I witnessed firsthand how getting policy down in official writing is only the first step—making sure it's implemented effectively is an entirely different beast.

But I also learned more from our bright, hopeful clients than any of my legal research. I was driven to serve them by their conviction in making Chicago a more just city for those most victimized by harmful police



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behavior. To be reminded at every meeting that this work doesn't exist in a vacuum, that good, serious, and dedicated work is required to advance our clients' causes, connects the legal knowledge I gained this summer to the real world in a way that sitting in lectures and taking hours-long exams never did. Part one of my legal education was starting to learn what the law looks like on paper; this summer, I got to experience what it was to learn by doing, not by reading and answering questions.

I am endlessly grateful to Professor Craig Futterman, who trusted me with work I had never done before and let me find my own way to completing my assignments. Nearly every experience I had in the clinic was a new one, but I had wise, kind, and empathetic guidance into work that at times seems insurmountably grim. I am inspired by my boss's lifelong dedication to the advancement of justice against those who routinely fail, often catastrophically, in their sworn duty to protect and serve the public. As I go into my 2L year at Chicago Law and return to the clinic as a student lawyer in the Autumn Quarter, I look forward to continuing the hands-on process of learning how to be an effective legal advocate throughout the litigation process, how to draft policy recommendations, how to engage with the South Side community in innovative and useful ways, and how to use the immense privilege I have been granted to make positive change in the city of Chicago.

Thank you for following along with my internship experience this summer. I'm looking forward to what the new year will bring.