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Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Law School: University of Michigan Law School

Organization: Legal Aid Chicago

Update 1: This month, I started my internship with Legal Aid Chicago. As an EJA Fellow this summer, I will be posting an occasional EJA Fellow Update to promote the work that Equal Justice America does to fund legal aid work.

After working as a part-time extern with Legal Aid Chicago's Immigrant and Workers' Rights Practice Group last semester, I am excited to be working full-time this summer doing plaintiff-side employment law for low-income workers in Chicago.

So far, I've already had the opportunity to draft a complaint in a wage and hour case under the Fair Labor Standards Act and prepare interrogatories and document requests for discovery in a discrimination case. I've also conducted intake interviews for clients dealing with unemployment insurance issues or who have endured unlawful conduct in the workplace such as discrimination, wage and hour violations, or retaliation.

Update 2: As of today, I am five weeks into my internship with Legal Aid Chicago. As an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer, I will be posting an occasional #EJAFellowUpdate to promote the work that Equal Justice America does to fund legal aid work. This is my second of five updates.

Since my last post, I have had the opportunity to draft responses to interrogatories and discovery requests in the same case for which I drafted our client's interrogatories. Doing so has been a great opportunity to see the full scope of the discovery process in employment law cases. Next week, I will represent a client in an unemployment insurance hearing and complete research related to racial discrimination under Title VII.

I have also had the opportunity to contribute to a brief in an upcoming asylum hearing. Although my work this summer is focused primarily on employment law, I have taken coursework in immigration law and have appreciated the chance to put those skills into practice for a family seeking defensive asylum relief. This work



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has affirmed the important of effective legal representation for low-income people in need of critical legal assistance.

Update 3:

I have now completed the seventh week of my internship with Legal Aid Chicago. As an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer, I will be posting an occasional EJA Fellow Update to promote the work that Equal Justice America does to fund legal aid work. This is my third of five updates.

In the past two weeks, I have represented two different clients in unemployment insurance administrative hearings before an Administrative Law Judge. These hearings are a great opportunity for oral advocacy. I've had to lay the foundation for and introduce exhibits, conduct direct and cross-examinations of witnesses, make a closing argument, and object to questions during the hearings. After taking Evidence last semester, it's been fun to put some of those lessons into practice to advocate for my clients.

I also have continued to work on research and writing for an asylum brief that will be submitted later this month, conduct client intakes and identify potential legal claims, and conduct research into an ADA accommodations issue and a Title VII issue.

The summer has flown by, and I hope to make the most of my last few weeks representing low-income workers at Legal Aid Chicago.

Update 4: I have now completed the ninth week of my internship with Legal Aid Chicago. As an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer, I will be posting an occasional #EJAFellowUpdate to promote the work that Equal Justice America does to fund legal aid work. This is my fourth of five updates.

As I enter the final week of my summer internship with Legal Aid Chicago, I am grateful for the breadth of opportunities I've had to develop as a law student and advocate over the late nine weeks thanks to the guidance of the staff attorneys, supervisors, and fellow interns in the Immigrant and Workers' Rights Practice Group.

Last week, I found out that I won all three of the administrative hearings that I led this summer, resulting in tens of thousands of dollars in total benefits for my clients. Beyond these practical experiences, the opportunity to complete client intakes, conduct legal research, and present cases at our practice group's weekly "Case Acceptance Meeting" has improved my understanding of what constitutes a strong employment law case for a potential plaintiff. Finally, drafting demand letters and charges, complaints, and discovery requests has improved my understanding of how to litigate an employment law case.

I look forward to my final week at Legal Aid Chicago.



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Update 5:

Two weeks ago, I finished my internship with Legal Aid Chicago and returned to Michigan for my final year at Michigan Law. As an Equal Justice America Fellow this summer, I have been posting an occasional EJA Fellow Update to promote the work that Equal Justice America does to fund legal aid work. This is my fifth and final update.

Reflecting on my time with the Immigrant and Workers' Rights practice group this summer, I could not have asked for a more engaging and meaningful experience. The dedication of the attorneys, supervisors, and staff within the practice group reminded me of why I am pursuing a public interest legal career and learning about my clients' experiences and legal issues reminded me of why I am passionate about workers' rights. Throughout my internship, I had the opportunity to assist legal aid attorneys in litigating claims involving wage theft, sexual harassment, and racial discrimination. While it was difficult to hear about how our clients were mistreated, I was motivated by their courage in fighting back against injustice and their trust in us as their legal counsel to get the job done.

My summer internship also made clear that dedication and motivation are not sufficient to deliver justice for clients who were wronged. Effective lawyering, whether expressed through a skillfully pleaded complaint, effective oral advocacy before a judge, or the tactical negotiation of a settlement, is essential to being an effective advocate. This is particularly true when up against a well-resourced employer or experienced opposing counsel. The attorneys at Legal Aid Chicago showed me that passion and skill are complementary for excellent public interest lawyers, and I hope to carry that lesson with me throughout my career.

Meanwhile, the challenges facing workers in Chicago are immense – employers steal an estimated [\\$400 million](#) from Chicago's workers annually through wage theft, discrimination on the basis of race, sex, disability status, or other protected category remains [rampant](#), and workers fear retaliation for standing up against injustice. More broadly, in a given year, approximately half of the [1.2 million](#) people in Cook County who qualify for legal aid will need assistance with a civil legal issue. However, a lack of free or affordable legal services means that many low-income individuals' need for legal assistance will go unmet.

Amid these crises, organizations like EJA support aspiring public interest lawyers and legal services organizations doing this important work.