



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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**Law School:** University of Minnesota Law School

**Organization:** National Center for Youth Law

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**Update 1:** Hey everyone! I am thrilled to announce that I am working as a law clerk for the National Center for Youth Law this summer. As an NCYL clerk, I will be representing kids in impact litigation cases regarding the juvenile justice system. The organization Equal Justice America gave me a grant for this summer, so I am fundraising for them so other law students can launch their legal aid careers! I hope that you will consider donating to Equal Justice America, and bring us a step closer to providing "liberty and justice for ALL."

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**Update 2:** I am starting my second week of work at the National Center for Youth Law! I am working with the Justice and Equity Team. The Justice and Equity Team focuses on resolving injustice for kids in the juvenile justice system. One of the team's biggest current projects right now is the Debt Free Justice Campaign. This project focuses on policy and impact litigation to end the practice of charging kids and their families' exorbitant fees in municipal court. I'm so excited to be helping out with the Debt Free Justice Campaign!

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**Update 3:** This summer I worked as a law clerk on the Justice & Equity Team at the National Center for Youth Law. The NCYL advances impact litigation to aid children in several different legal areas (i.e. the criminal justice system, immigration detention, the child welfare system, education etc.). As a law clerk on the Justice & Equity team, I worked on NCYL projects connected to the national Debt Free Justice Campaign. The purpose of the Debt Free Justice Campaign is to eliminate unjust fines and fees that block youth access to counsel, discovery, and other fundamental rights. I was given several pre-litigation research development projects. I observed youth municipal court proceedings throughout the summer in the same municipality to record data on unfair fines, fees, and procedures used by the court. I developed and managed Freedom Of Information Act requests to gather information about unfair treatment of youth in juvenile facilities. I also researched potential liability for truancy courts and developed a memo analyzing whether the proposed litigation strategy was likely to be successful. Having previously worked in direct aid, learning about litigation development was a truly transformative experience. I am excited to continue working with the NCYL this fall.

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**Update 4:** Working in impact litigation at the National Center for Youth Law is totally different from my previous work experience. I have previously focused my work on direct aid, where I contact clients, interview them, and help resolve their immediate legal problems. Impact litigation, however, involved developing a large



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scale legal case with multiple plaintiffs in order to establish a change or different interpretation of the law. My projects at the National Center for Youth Law are all at the beginning phase of impact litigation: legal and factual research. Law school, and direct aid work, focus on learning the legal rules and finding an argument for your client. Impact litigation research, however, requires more creative thinking. You have to find a flaw in the rules, or argue that the state laws violate federal law. This creative thinking is more complex, and I am developing new research skills. There is also an element of factual research: finding and recording the facts that are necessary to make your argument. I am doing a court-watching project to record how youths are treated in various courts, and drafting Freedom of Information Act requests to access government records. This experience is transformative and I have learned tons of new skills.

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**Update 5:** For my final EJA Fellow Update, I want to express a ton of gratitude for my experience with the National Center for Youth Law this summer. NCYL is an incredible organization, and I had amazing opportunities to learn throughout the summer educational programming on various youth issues. My favorite memory from the summer was getting the opportunity to meet and bond with the other law clerks online. It can be difficult to connect with people over Zoom, but NCYL ensured clerks had an online social meeting space and also facilitated team building during staff meetings. As a law clerk on the Justice & Equity Team, I worked on NCYL projects connected to the national Debt Free Justice Campaign. The purpose of the Debt Free Justice Campaign is to eliminate unjust fines and fees that block youth access to counsel, discovery, and other fundamental rights. I was given several pre-litigation research development projects. I observed youth municipal court proceedings throughout the summer in the same municipality to record data on unfair fines, fees, and procedures used by the court. I developed and managed Freedom Of Information Act requests to gather information about unfair treatment of youth in juvenile facilities. I also researched potential liability for truancy courts and developed a memo analyzing whether the proposed litigation strategy was likely to be successful.

Having previously worked in direct aid, learning about litigation development was a truly transformative experience. Working on prelitigation research had a steep learning curve, and required me to think about the law a lot more creatively. While I really missed engaging with clients directly, my research projects were exciting, and I enjoyed the work. I also made up for the lack of client engagement by volunteering for the Anoka County Public Defenders Office part time this summer.

I am excited to continue working with the NCYL this fall as a law clerk for the Litigation Advocacy Team.

I was able to work at the National Center for Youth Law this summer due to a grant from Equal Justice America. Many legal aid organizations that provide free legal services are unable to pay their summer interns (interns at private law firms make \$30-50 per hour). If you are able, I encourage you to donate to Equal Justice America. Equal Justice America aims to provide \$5,000 grants to students working 400 hours in the summer: that is \$12.50 an hour. Think of it this way: contributing just \$12.50 to the campaign covers the cost of one hour of legal services to a person in need.