



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2022 EJA Fellow:



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Law School: UC Hastings

Organization: East Bay Community Law Center

Update 1: I am proud to announce that I am an Equal Justice America fellow this summer, working at East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC) in their Health and Welfare Clinic. First, I wanted to thank Equal Justice America for supporting and sponsoring my work for EBCLC this summer. I am so appreciative of all the work that EJA does to support law students who want to pursue a career in public interest law and legal aid.

The first few weeks of my legal internship at EBCLC have been informative and hands-on -- as well as an amazing opportunity to meet law students from other schools and attorneys at EBCLC who share a commitment to economic and racial justice through providing direct services to clients in Alameda County.

In the Health and Welfare Clinic, I have explored the social determinants of health and how these determinants contribute to unjust inequities in health outcomes. I have even been able to represent a client in an appeal hearing. Working closely with a client, preparing a brief, and taking part in a hearing has been so valuable and special to me. I am excited to further experience what it means to be an advocate who works with the client, not simply on behalf of them.

Update 2: I am continuing to gain hands-on experience and learn more about the breadth of legal aid work at East Bay Community Law Center.

From the time of my last EJA Fellow Update, I have had the opportunity to deliver a closing argument at an administrative hearing, conduct new client intakes, and work closely with new clients to assist with their legal problems concerning their public benefits. My work this summer has re-affirmed my commitment to direct services and individual advocacy.

Having the opportunity to develop a close and direct relationship with clients has built a foundation for me to



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zealously advocate for clients. I have enjoyed the opportunity to practice my advocacy, negotiation, communication, and cooperation skills, centering the clients' goals.

Update 3: As it is time to write my third EJA Fellow Update, I have had much opportunity to reflect upon the legal aid work I have been involved with at East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC).

I spoke with my supervisor recently about our role as advocates. One of EBCLC's values is to center the client and empower and support them in achieving their goals. To reach these goals, we do things like letting the client lead, speak their truth, and represent their goals. What happens when there is a conflict between legal "strategy" and a client's truth? How can we as advocates empower clients the most when we are operating within legal systems with many complicated procedural rules, rules which are often unfair. It is hard to come to one clear answer, but I have spent a great deal of time reflecting on these questions and will bring this reflection with me to future experiences as I continue to advocate for clients.

As my time with EBCLC is coming to a close and I am getting ready to transition my cases to the next set of interns, I am feeling immensely grateful to have had the amount of client interaction I was able to have. It has been a pleasure and privilege to work with my clients, get to know a bit about them, and support them in their goals.

Update 4: My summer internship at East Bay Community Law Center has ended and I have been reflecting upon my experience this summer and how it has influenced my career goals and law school experience moving forward.

This summer, I was able to live what it means to be an advocate — how to center your client and follow their lead. I learned how to live by the following:

1. Never question your client's truth.
2. Empathy, compassion, and respect should guide client interactions.
3. Center your client's goals, not your own goals.
4. Keep in mind the trauma that your client has gone through and be mindful about their experience.
5. Set realistic expectations regarding outcomes with your client.

I will take these "commandments" with me as I continue to pursue individual client-centered work. My summer at EBCLC has cemented my passion for direct client services and advocacy. This passion drives my path moving forward.

In my upcoming fall semester of law school, I am doing two clinics focused on individual clients: the Workers' Rights Clinic and the Individual Representation Clinic. I hope to further my advocacy skills and cultivating



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individual relationships with clients.

I am seeking summer 2023 opportunities with either Plaintiffs' Firms or legal aid organizations to also further my direct client services and representation skills.

Update 5: As I write my fifth and final EJA Fellow Update of the summer, I am about to start my second year of law school. After my summer internship at East Bay Community Law Center, funded and supported in part by Equal Justice America, I feel particularly equipped to translate what I learned this summer to the classroom and other experience at law school.

First, I was able to communicate with clients every day at EBCLC in different settings. I conducted new client intakes, where I'd gather demographic information about the client, talk about their legal issue(s), and learn what their goals are. Additionally, I did fact-finding interviews with clients to build their case. I also advocated for clients with an administrative law judge, Alameda County, and the Social Security Administration.

Having practiced these various types of client communications will be an asset as I participate in the Workers' Rights Clinic and Individual Representation this upcoming school year. My experience conducting new client intakes will be particularly relevant for the Workers' Rights Clinic, as the clinic provides legal advice to clients coming to us with a legal problem regarding labor and employment. Synthesizing the clients' goals and legal issue from these intake interviews is something that I was able to practice at EBCLC as well.

Having fact-finding phone calls with my clients at EBCLC to build their case will directly translate to my upcoming work in the Individual Representation Clinic, where I will advocate for a client and see their case from beginning to end.

I also believe that my summer experience has made me a better student and helped me strengthen skills that I will use in the classroom this year in my courses. At the start of this summer, I did not have much of a substantive understanding of the law surrounding public benefits in California. Through practice, study, and hands-on experience where I learned on the job, I became more familiar with this new area of the law for me. Just like a course in law school, where I will be entering with little, if any, understanding of the area of law the course is covering, these skills of learning in the moment, research, and study will be extremely applicable to my courses and success as a student.

Finally, I also believe that my summer at EBCLC has made me a better advocate in general, and has helped me find my voice. My experience at EBCLC has further opened my eyes to various injustices in the law, and who is able to receive legal representation. I will use this experience to advocate and contribute meaningfully on campus.

Thank you so much to Equal Justice America for the incredible opportunity to do meaningful and valuable work at EBCLC this summer.