



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:

**Name:** Jeremy Montano

**Law School:** Fordham University School of Law

**Fellowship:** Equal Justice Works Veterans Assistance

---

### Entry 1:

I've recently completed my first two weeks and have already worked on a variety of interesting cases. Just today I assisted with drafting a summary of a child's IEP and other evaluations so they can access special education services. So far, I have assisted with SNAP benefits, housing, unemployment insurance, and a particularly tricky case involving a fraudulent deed. (Don't ask!) I've had the opportunity to travel to hearings and meet with interesting, charming, and often legitimately hilarious people from many walks of life. Most all are veterans, but interestingly, few bring it up or make it a focal point of their cases; they face the same challenges that we all do, and are just fighting to make sure they have a fair shake like the rest of us. I look forward to seeing what I work on and who I meet as the weeks progress.

---

### Entry 2:

In the weeks since my first entry, I have continued to assist a variety of interesting clients and worked on a variety of cases. Certainly, the vast majority relate in one way or another to housing. If there is an overarching lesson to take thus far from interning in legal services, it is that housing is by far the biggest need, especially in cities where affordable housing is increasingly lacking. Interestingly, this has also entailed ongoing work with some of the same clients; for instance, the previously mentioned fraudulent deed case is ongoing, and even clients whose other cases have wrapped have in some cases returned for ongoing assistance with other matters. Working on cases has also entailed surprisingly complex research at times, far beyond what I would have typically expected from legal services. The deed case also offers an interesting lesson: that legal services are not always defensive, or for basic services, but can also be used aggressively when a client has been seriously wronged by another party. I shall see how that case and others progress in the coming weeks.

---

### Entry 3:

As the summer gets closer to wrapping, I'm seeing even more of a breadth of cases. Perhaps one of the most interesting things, as covered before, is that very little of the work I'm doing seems to relate directly to typical veterans' services (such as dealing with Veterans Affairs). Most all cases have been centered around other needs, such as employment or housing. Sometimes, it clearly just helps for someone to be there - a recent case regarding



unemployment benefits would have wrapped up fine without our help, thanks to the veteran's own due diligence, but what would have been missed was the assurance of being able to speak with experts who could assure him that he would be okay. Even when our services are not otherwise immediately necessary, many of our clients are quite appreciative just to have someone to speak with and make sure they are going about their case in the right way. When someone is alone or navigating a difficult system, there is no substitute for having someone to talk to.

Other cases, of course, remain more complex, and there are cases I began working on at the beginning of the summer that I am still working on, and most likely will still be on the docket well after the summer wraps (particularly the mortgage case mentioned previously). Truth be told, it will be difficult letting go of some of them and wondering how they turn out.

---

#### **Entry 4:**

With the program wrapped up now, I can say that I've experienced a wide breadth of cases. As anticipated, one of the most difficult things about leaving the internship program is knowing that many of the cases I worked on remain ongoing; aside from the obvious curiosity about how they turn out, I wish I could continue to assist more of them through to the end. Alas, my time with them is over for now. However, the internship has helped confirm my interest in public service, so while I will probably never encounter any of those individual clients again, I will likely encounter many of their issues again in my next internships and in my eventual line of work.

As I may have written earlier, my specific interest is in employment and labor. A number of cases I worked on at least touched on those issues, and in some cases were directly relevant. While I never dealt with any unions, I did deal with employment discrimination and wrongful termination cases, including for unemployment benefits. Those experiences will help me as I eventually move to work in those areas more directly.