



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



Name: Rachel Freeman-Cook

Law School: Boston College

Organization: Greater Boston Legal Services

Update 1:

Today marks the beginning of my second week at Greater Boston Legal Services! I was very fortunate to receive a Fellowship from Equal Justice America which enabled me to accept an unpaid internship providing legal aid to people living in poverty. I've already been assigned my first two cases, and I am diving head-first into legal research about how best to support my clients and their children! I'm incredibly grateful for this opportunity to provide free legal services to victims of domestic violence, and I know I'll be learning and growing exponentially as the summer goes on.

I can't wait to apply all of the skills I learn this summer to my continued legal education at Boston College. Happy summer everyone!

Update 2:

I'm back with another EJA Fellow Update at the end of my first month with Greater Boston Legal Services! This week I got to observe a trial from VIP seats in the jury box, and I've been working hard to prepare pleadings and motions for my own clients' cases as well. I'm so lucky to be able to do this work thanks to the funding I've received from Equal Justice America's fellowship program and @Boston College Law School's Public Interest Law Fund. Legal aid is challenging, exhausting, and rewarding all at once, and I'm very glad to be able to spend my summer working right in the thick of it!

Update 3:

According to the CDC, approximately 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men in the United States will experience severe physical violence from an intimate partner at some point during their lifetime. Those numbers don't account for unreported violence, and they don't capture the entire scope of what domestic violence can look like.



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Abusers can perpetrate harm against their victims in countless ways, including physically, socially, economically, emotionally, mentally, and more. My work at Greater Boston Legal Services this summer has been incredibly rewarding, as well as a staggering reminder of how prevalent domestic violence is in our community.

I'm lucky to have the opportunity to learn from the fantastic attorneys here in the Family Law Unit this summer.

Update 4:

As my time at Greater Boston Legal Services is wrapping up, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for my supervisors, clients, co-interns, and everyone who was kind enough to donate to my fellowship fund. I didn't know very much about civil legal aid upon starting at Boston College Law School last fall; I had far more experience with criminal justice and public policy. This summer has been a fantastic way to broaden my horizons and expand upon my legal education with valuable first-hand experience.

Equal Justice America estimates that 80% of those living in poverty who require civil legal services don't have their needs met. The U.S. legal system is prohibitively expensive and complex, and there is a glaring access-to-justice gap in our country. Even for those of us who are privileged enough to be studying the law, the intricacies of our system take years to learn and a lifetime to master. Expecting people to navigate this maze successfully on their own is ludicrous, and I have so much respect for attorneys who spend their careers working to close this gap. I've been very lucky to spend my summer in the Family Law Unit providing free legal aid to victims of domestic violence in the Boston area.

Update 5:

Now that I've finished my summer internship at Greater Boston Legal Services, I want to post once more and say how incredibly thankful I am for the experience. I now have a full year of legal education under my belt, and I'm very proud of the work I was able to do for my clients this summer. I'm looking forward to getting back to Boston College Law School and applying my practical legal experience to future classes and clinics.

Equal Justice America's summer fellowship program helped me keep my head above water while still managing to provide free legal aid to those in need.

That's it for my last EJA Fellow Update!