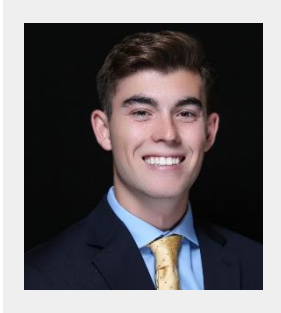




# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Jake Gnolfo

**Law School:** Loyola University Chicago School of Law

**Organization:** Legal Aid Chicago – Children and Families Practice Group

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**Update 1:** Today marks two weeks into my internship and I'm happy to share my (first) EJA Fellow Update. At Legal Aid Chicago, I work on two teams within the Children and Families Practice Group. First, working with the Family Law team, I've had the opportunity to work on divorce cases, orders of protection, and in a few weeks, I'll have my first opportunity to step up in court with my 711. Second, on the Education Law team, I have observed various special education meetings regarding IEPs for youth in care.

I cannot emphasize enough how grateful I am for the supportive and collaborative environment at Legal Aid Chicago.

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**Update 2:** Today ends my fourth week of my internship at Legal Aid Chicago, so I'm happy to share my (second) EJA Fellow Update. Since my last post, I have gained a lot more experience.

Last week, I stood up in court for the first time as a 711-licensed student attorney. Speaking on behalf of a client before a judge was thrilling, and I look forward to my next court date for this case. I also drafted several motions and answer briefs for various cases related to orders of protection and parenting time disputes. Finally, I sat in on a client meeting where we had to use a translator to converse with the client. I learned how to properly communicate with non-English speakers and the importance of being able to simplify legal matters for clients in a simple and understandable way.

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**Update 3:** I am now six weeks into my internship at Legal Aid Chicago, so I'm happy to share my (third) EJA Fellow Update. Since my last post, I have gained more in-court experience.

This past week, I prepared a default divorce prove up hearing where I would represent our client in court and perform a direct examination of her. During our hearing, my computer crashed (oh, the joys of Zoom court and technology), but thankfully my wonderful supervisor, Mallory Morgan, was able to finish the hearing.



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Regardless, it was a great experience, and I learned a lot about direct examinations while I prepared the client prior to the hearing.

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**Update 4:** I am now eight weeks into my internship at Legal Aid Chicago, so I'm happy to share my (fourth) EJA Fellow Update. Only two weeks left!

These past few weeks I have received more court experience, including my first in-person appearance! Every time I appear before a judge, I become more and more comfortable, so I am thankful for the continued opportunities that CFPG provides me.

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**Update 5:** Last week, I completed my internship with the Children and Families Practice Group at Legal Aid Chicago, so I am happy to share my (final) EJA Fellow Update.

I have greatly enjoyed my time at Legal Aid Chicago and can confidently say I learned so much about the legal profession, and specifically the direct representation of clients. My two main goals for this summer were to 1) advocate for clients in court using my 711 license, and 2) draft litigation materials including motions, orders, discovery requests and answers, and demand letters. After ten weeks, I have met both of these goals.

First, I represented three different clients in virtual and in-person hearings. Appearing before a judge is intimidating, but after doing it once, I felt it get easier each time I did it. I greatly enjoyed being able to advocate for our client while moving their litigation along. I also enjoyed preparing for these hearings by interviewing clients, preparing them for the testimony, and reviewing the background of the case. One of these clients was a mono-lingual Spanish speaker, so I appreciated the fact that I could experience what it was like to communicate with a client through a translator.

Second, I drafted a multitude of motions, orders, and discovery requests. Doing so taught me how to be concise while conveying exactly what the court needed to rule in our favor. Along with that, I enjoyed having to quickly research the authority, whether it be statutory or precedent, that supported our position. Doing so on a quick yet accurate basis taught me the importance of knowing how to research well.

My experience at Legal Aid Chicago was fantastic. I enjoyed meeting other attorneys who care about the same work that I do, along with getting to know their backgrounds. I also liked being at an organization with over one hundred attorneys where I could learn the inner-workings of a large legal aid organization. Thank you to Equal Justice America for helping to fund my experience.