



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:

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Update 1: I am so grateful to have received funding through EJA this summer. During my time at the Legal Clinic for the Disabled, I have gotten to interact with clients and help them through issues involving Social Security, housing, custody, and advanced planning documents. I am enjoying the daily client interaction and helping put people at ease during these difficult times in their lives. This week I took part in a Community Legal Outreach Event which involved helping clients with visual impairments and blindness create Wills, Financial Powers of Attorney, and Healthcare Powers of Attorney. We partnered with other attorneys throughout Philadelphia and trained them on how to interact with clients who might be experiencing trauma and have had bad experiences with the legal system in the past. This event was very special as it allowed these clients to create these extremely important documents that will allow them to plan for their future at no cost. Typically, these documents would cost hundreds of dollars to create, which many of our clients do not have. The clients were so relieved to have these documents in place. I am so fortunate to have been a part of this event and am looking forward to participating in more of these types of events throughout the summer. I would not be here without the funding from EJA!

Update 2: Another two weeks flew by! During these past two weeks, I worked on our Medical Legal Partnership (MLP) at two different medical sites in Philadelphia and started the housing rotation portion of my internship. At one of the MLP sites, we assist people who are unhoused deal with any sort of legal issue they may be having. I was able to help a client get her birth certificate from another state free of charge. This was a very large hurdle for her, so I was so happy that we were able to get it done and in a timely manner. Additionally, I supported a client at Family Court with my prior experience as a Victim's Advocate for people who have experience domestic violence. Lastly, I started working on the Clinic's Housing Rotation which helps clients going through evictions or have issues with habitability. I went to court and performed intakes for clients who went to court without representation. I am so fortunate that I am an EJA Fellow because it allows me to do this type of work which is so crucial to the disabled community in Philadelphia.

Update 3: These past two weeks were very busy! I finished my last two weeks on the housing rotation. Most of the housing rotation consists of being in landlord tenant court. One great service that the Legal Clinic for Disabled provides is the participation in the Lawyer of the Day Program (LOTD) at Landlord/Tenant court. On Wednesday morning, we take up to five clients who have shown up to court without a lawyer. We are providing this service free of charge to the clients. In most of these cases, we will ask the judge for a continuance in order to have a chance to meet with the client and hear about their stories and what is going on with them from a legal perspective. The clients are always so grateful especially because most of their landlords are being represented by experienced landlord lawyers which is very intimidating for our clients. Another way we get



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clients is through the Tenant Union Representative Network also known as TURN. TURN will refer clients who are currently in the process of an eviction or clients who are having issues with habitability. This process allows more people to be represented by attorneys which is helpful in landlord tenant court as the process is very overwhelming.

Update 4: I am almost at the end of my internship at the Legal Clinic for the Disabled. It's hard to believe that I only have one week left. During the past two weeks I have been working on our general intake rotation. Our general intake line is open on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays. We get a variety of calls with most of them being focused on family law, advanced directives, and social security related issues. In terms of family law, we are able to help with custody, simple divorces, and protection from abuse orders. For advanced directives, we provide clients with simple wills, powers of attorney for financial and healthcare, and healthcare representative letters. For clients who are unable to come into our office, we will go to the client's home. This is such an important service because it allows clients to plan for the futures, free of charge. Additionally, over the past two weeks we hosted a birth certificate clinic for people who are unhoused in Philadelphia. Through the clinic we were able to help 17 individuals file to get their birth certificates, free of charge. These clients needed their birth certificates for employment, housing, social security, and for a variety of different reasons. Given that this is such a vulnerable population, this work was essential.

Update 5: My summer at the Legal Clinic for the Disabled could not have gone any better. LCD's work is something that made me excited to get out of bed each morning, and I am so grateful for getting the chance to intern there this summer. This summer I got to work on 3 different rotations for the clinic. I first worked on the Medical Legal Partnership rotation, followed by the housing rotation, and I finished up with the General Intake rotation. The Medical Legal Partnership rotation focused on helping clients with legal issues that were impacting their health. We met clients throughout our 9 MLP sites in Philadelphia and met with some of them before or after their doctors' appointments. I loved being able to work in person with clients and get their issues resolved right then in there rather than having them have to come back to the clinic. The housing rotation was eye-opening. Seeing how the eviction process works in Philadelphia is disturbing, especially considering the amount of rights that tenants have that they do not know about. People are taken advantage of this system every day, and it was very empowering to make people aware of their rights so that they could better protect themselves. During my last few weeks, there was an eviction moratorium which was so helpful to my clients so that they had a bit more time to stay in their homes and make plans for their next steps without the fear of an eviction during that week. Lastly, my rotation on General Intake consisted of many family law issues and Advanced Planning Documents. The family law aspect was my favorite part of my whole internship and showed me how much reform is needed in that system. I was especially alarmed at the lack of relationships that qualify in Pennsylvania when filing a Protection from Abuse Order (PFA). Going to school in New Jersey and volunteering at Rutgers' Domestic Violence Project showed me how different laws can be 20 minutes away. Going forward, I will take with me the importance of taking the time to listen to everyone's stories. Our clients don't always have the chance to be heard and I am grateful that I was able to give them the opportunity to share their stories. I also want to make sure that I always lead with compassion. Ultimately, we are all more alike than we are different. I am so grateful for EJA and the chance I got to work with the Legal Clinic for the Disabled.