



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: Oregon Law Center

Update 1: Last week I began the second half of my split summer internships (time is flying!). I'll be spending the next six weeks in Portland, Oregon as a law clerk for the Oregon Law Center. I'm very grateful to receive funding through both Equal Justice America and the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School to support my legal aid work this summer. Equal Justice America is a nonprofit that helps fund law students working with vulnerable citizens and people in poverty. Their hard work increases the number of future lawyers who are able to gain public interest experience and ensure everyone has access to justice.

The mission of the Oregon Law Center is to achieve justice for the low-income communities of Oregon by providing a full range of the highest quality civil legal services. As a legal aid organization, Oregon Law Center helps further fairness and equality in the legal process. I am grateful for the opportunity to support this important work, including that being done via direct client representation and through a broader systemic approach. I am especially excited to be working with the health law and legislative advocacy teams as they advocate for the needs of their clients. I'm looking forward to a busy and rewarding six weeks!

Update 2: Civil legal aid is a crucial way to increase equal access to justice and protect basic human rights for those in need. According to the American Bar Association, 80% of the civil legal needs of those in poverty are not being met. As I enter my fourth week of work at the Oregon Law Center, I am grateful for the excellent learning opportunities I have had to witness the important work being done by the center's attorneys to provide much needed services in Oregon.

One substantial area of need for the Oregon Law Center's clients is housing law. This includes advocacy regarding tenant-landlord disputes, Fair Housing, and homelessness. This summer, the Oregon Law Center interns have been assisting in several litigation matters where the Center represents individuals experiencing homelessness. This week, I had the chance to work on a case regarding the criminalization of living and sleeping outside. This case was a poignant reminder of the injustices experienced by this population and why free civil legal services are imperative for those without the resources to acquire private representation. It has been invaluable to learn from seasoned and passionate attorneys about their strategies and processes.

Update 3: Another week has come and gone at the Oregon Law Center! This week I got the chance to assist with a client interview utilizing a language translation service. Language access rights are a crucial part of



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providing public services and can include the use of oral translators and translated documents. Not only are language access services required under federal programs like Medicaid, but clients are entitled to language access services at any legal services office that receives money from the U.S. government, including those based in government agencies.

This week was the first time I have completed a client interview using the assistance of a translator. It was a great learning opportunity to witness how the attorney chose to phrase her questions, break up her responses, and make the communication as efficient as possible, without sacrificing the thoroughness of the interview. It is so vital that legal aid clients have the opportunity to explain their stories in their native language. Translation services are crucial to the fair administration of justice, so I am grateful to work for an organization that values and promotes language access.

Update 4: I recently wrapped up my last week at the Oregon Law Center (OLC)—making this my fourth and final post about my internship this summer! The last six months at the OLC was not my first time working with a legal aid organization, yet I gained so much from the attorneys in Portland doing this work. Below is a summary of the issues and advocacy I was able to assist with this summer.

Portland has recently become infamous for its growing population of individuals experiencing homelessness. According to the Annual Homeless Assessment Report, 42 out of every 10,000 people in Oregon were experiencing homelessness in 2022. This summer, I was grateful to work with OLC attorneys on cases that fought against the criminalization of homelessness and sleeping on public property. I was able to support litigation research and preparation in cases fighting to ensure people experiencing homelessness are provided with their Constitutional rights in Oregon cities.

Additionally, I worked with the OLC Legislative Advocacy Team to research policy issue areas related to homelessness to prepare for next year's legislative session. I have a long-standing interest in policy and legislation, and it was beyond invaluable to see the role these attorneys play in the Oregon legal aid network. It was wonderful to support their hard work, as well as learn more about legislative progress in Oregon.

Finally, I got the chance to work on some health law cases for insurance coverage of durable medical equipment and language access in health care settings. Access to healthcare is a crucial right for OLC clients and it was wonderful to work alongside such passionate and talented attorneys to advocate for patients' language access rights. Additionally, I learned more about translation services and healthcare organization requirements under Medicaid.

On top of my assignments, the OLC never shied away from providing learning opportunities for the summer interns. We were able to watch attorneys argue in Court, meet statewide advocates, and attend various legal task force meetings. I am incredibly grateful for all of the experiences I had this summer and am excited to enter my last year of law school with a wealth of knowledge about legal aid lawyering.

I'm very thankful for Equal Justice America and the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School for making my work at the OLC this summer possible.