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Summer 2023 EJA Fellow:



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Update 1:

I'm so grateful to receive funding from Equal Justice America to support my legal internship with the Family Defense Practice at the Brooklyn Defender Services this summer. I have spent the first few weeks of my internship learning about how the family regulation system disproportionately impacts people of color and people experiencing poverty. On top of that, the family regulation legal system can be confusing and inaccessible. I look forward to learning how to best advocate for parents as they navigate the family regulation system and work to reunify families. Thanks again to Equal Justice America for supporting me through this enriching process!

Update 2:

This is already my fourth week with the Family Defense Practice at Brooklyn Defender Services. Yesterday, I observed court proceedings in Kings County Family Court. I was again reminded of the importance of legal representation in legal proceedings. It is important to not only have someone who understands legal language, standards, and proceedings, but also have an advocate by your side. I am again grateful to EJA for helping me be an advocate for someone!



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Update 3:

I've been taking on larger projects at my internship with the Family Defense Practice at the Brooklyn Defender Services. That being said, I've been diving deeper into each case I'm working on. I've learned so much about the legal intricacies of Article 10 (abuse and neglect) cases and best client practices. I've been thinking a lot about how to best represent and aid clients who are holding distrust towards service providers, being oppressed by multiple systems of oppression, and already experiencing intrusion into their personal life. There's no one clear answer but I'm grateful to have the opportunity to ponder these larger questions! Thank you EJA for allowing me to have this time to grow.

Update 4:

I've been able to develop stronger relationships with clients I am working with this past few weeks. I am feeling very grateful for their trust in me to work on their case and their willingness to be honest and vulnerable with me. I've been thinking deeper about how I can become a better advocate while remaining my authentic self. I am grateful to be given this chance to think about such things! As I enter my last few weeks of my internship, I am doing a lot of personal reflection on what it takes to make the work of civil legal aid and public defense sustainable for those doing the work. While the work is so rewarding and fulfilling at times, it can also feel very draining and exhausting. I hope to learn more from other attorneys about how to make the work sustainable.

Update 5:

I just finished my internship with the Family Defense Practice at the Brooklyn Defender Services. I learned so much substantive legal knowledge about the family regulation system in New York City and developed many legal skills, including legal research, writing, and oral advocacy skills. I am so grateful for the experience. I found the work extremely fulfilling and am leaving feeling rejuvenated in my passions and interests.

For my last update, I want to discuss the fact that family defense representation is not guaranteed for everyone in the United States, despite the fact that family separation happens all across the country. The



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family regulation system particularly targets poor families and families of color and brings on harsh consequences for those who are targeted, including surveillance, family separation, and criminal charges. I hope going forward that family defense becomes a more universal model and that less families are separated.