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SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Ailsa Ferland
LAW SCHOOL	American University Washington College of Law
ORGANIZATION	Ayuda

Update 1: I just finished my first full week interning with the DC Immigration Team at Ayuda! Since starting last week, I have attended a fabulous training for public interest interns run by the Washington Council Of Lawyers, helped prepare supplemental evidence for a client's asylum interview, and learned to navigate USCIS's online filing system by starting work on a Temporary Protected Status Form (I-821). I get up every morning excited to go to work, and I cannot wait to continue learning about Immigration Law this summer!

Update 2: The last two weeks have been client centered. I spoke with clients on the phone to learn more about their experiences working with Ayuda, figured out how to search for client court records and police reports (with a little bit of trial and error, pun intended), and assisted my supervisor throughout an in-person client meeting for the first time. I also helped translate several documents from Spanish to English for USCIS filings. I'm eager to meet more clients in the coming weeks and to continue learning from my amazing supervisor and the whole Ayuda team.

Last Thursday, I also had the wonderful opportunity to meet other EJA Fellows in DC at an after-work reception downtown. I am so grateful to Equal Justice America for helping support my work and the work of other public interest interns this summer.

Update 3: This week, I attended my first Immigration Court hearing. It was a humbling experience to watch lawyers that I work with every day zealously advocate for a client seeking asylum. I was incredibly lucky to help work on some of the preparation for the hearing and to witness the similarities and differences between Immigration Court and other U.S. court systems. I found it especially interesting, and at times frustrating, to see how much power prosecutorial discretion has in determining the final decision in an Immigration Court case. Overall, it was empowering to watch the entire Ayuda Immigration Team collaborate in preparation for the hearing and to see how comforted the client felt by the caring and strength of their lawyers.



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Update 4: Since my last update, the Immigration Attorneys at Ayuda have empowered me to lead meetings with clients in both English and Spanish. Through these meetings, I have started to learn how to ask questions in different ways to get the right information, how to set boundaries with clients to ensure there is enough time to complete all my projects for the day, and how to show empathy without letting it interfere with my ability to get the legal work done. I have always said that I want to work directly with the people and communities I am serving, and working directly with clients at Ayuda has reaffirmed this belief. It is so exhilarating to meet with clients after dedicating time to filling out immigration forms or translating documents for them. I look forward to continuing to build client relationships in the last few weeks of my internship.

Update 5: My summer at Ayuda flew by. Throughout my internship, I was exposed to a wide variety of immigration law. I started the summer working on an asylum case and finished my internship helping a few clients apply for their green cards. In between, I helped at Ayuda's Temporary Protected Status Pro-Bono clinic, worked with a client to complete a U-derivative visa application, and attended an Immigration Court hearing for a client seeking asylum. In my last couple weeks at Ayuda, I even helped draft a supplemental brief for the court to highlight changes in law applicable to a different asylum case. All this to say, I was exposed to A LOT. A lot of immigration forms, a lot of clients, a lot of communication styles, and a lot of fun and professional growth along the way.

I learned so much about immigration law, public interest law, direct client services, trauma-informed services, and client-centered practice this summer. One thing that stands out is how empowering it is to use my language skills to communicate with clients in their native tongue. Many clients I worked with were so grateful that I was able to directly translate forms written in English for them. This work reaffirmed the appeal of using my language skills and offering direct client services in future roles.

I am so grateful to my supervisor and the attorneys at Ayuda for their trust and guidance this summer. The team cultivated an incredibly collaborative and supportive work environment. While I had a direct supervisor who I reported to each week, I worked with every attorney on my team on at least one project. Although everyone had busy workloads, I always felt like I could go to any attorney if I had a question, and whenever I spoke, I felt listened to and supported. This experience has greatly informed me on what kind of lawyer and teammate I aspire to be. It is bittersweet to leave, but I know I will always be an Ayudante.

Huge thank you to Equal Justice America for helping support my work this summer and to American University Washington College of Law for connecting me with both organizations.