



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Greater Boston Legal Services

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**Update 1:** Last week was my first week as an intern at GBLs. I completed numerous trainings including: Overview of Different Types of Family Law Cases, Procedural Family Law (Divorce), Trauma Informed Lawyering, and Intake 101 -- Using the Divorce Questionnaire. My team also completed a substantive divorce law exercise where we practiced using Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 208. Moreover, I was able to see a court hearing in Probate and Family Court. It was a Motion to Reconsider child support payments. Finally, I was assigned two clients, reviewed their cases and completed outreach.

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**Update 2:** I currently have four clients that I have been assisting with various matters. I am going to court this week for a 209A extension. I was able to draft an affidavit based on the case history and two phone calls with the client. She is lovely and I am thrilled I got to help her. I had another client withdraw her divorce case, which is unfortunate, but I respect her decision, and we were able to explain to her all her options and mentioned that she could come back if she needs further assistance. Another case is a TO for contempt because the father was not paying child support. I was able to draft an agreement for him to pay the arrears and sent it to the opposing party. Our goal is to avoid going to court for this case. Finally, I received a fourth client who we will likely be working on a child support agreement. I have yet to fully review her file. Overall, it has been a great experience helping survivors with these legal issues, but it has also had challenges. I am unfortunately tasked with asking them uncomfortable questions about things they would rather not discuss. However, the goal is to help them, and I think I will be able to do that.

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**Update 3:** My client who I prepared an affidavit for a 209A extension had a successful hearing and a two-year extension was granted. It was very rewarding to see how happy she was to have this granted. For another client I reviewed bank statements as part of discovery in order to adequately determine child support. Unfortunately, this same client is facing eviction, so I wrote a referral for her to our housing unit. For another client, I was brought into her pretrial hearing, but it was postponed because the court required that she bring a birth certificate for her new



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child. Our next steps include making sure she receives benefits for her children from the opposing party. I am also currently preparing one joint motion of dismissal and a notice of dismissal. I learned that a joint motion was necessary for one case since the opposing party filed an answer while a notice was sufficient for the other since no answer was filed.

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**Update 4:** I am working on pleadings for a client filing for divorce. GBLS previously did her restraining order and VAWA application. We are also doing a motion to impound her address and an affidavit since she has a restraining order and does not want him to be able to locate her and the kids. For this case I will likely need to prepare a motion for alternative service since the opposing party is unhoused. I also did client intake and was able to listen in on a call where we provided her advice for her restraining order hearing. Due to personnel restraints, we were unable to represent her, but we are continuing to provide her advice. I also filed a motion to dismiss a divorce and have been coordinating with opposing counsel on a motion to dismiss a divorce for another client.

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**Update 5:** In my final week at my internship, I was able to observe a contested 209A hearing at Waltham District Court. I also tied up my remaining projects. I met with a client about her complaint for divorce. We recently found out that her husband had been arrested so it is likely that we would not do service by publication and would have to serve him directly. The client has a restraining order against him so she was scared but we reassured her that we impounded her address so he will not know where she lives and that he would likely not attend the divorce hearings since he is afraid of getting in trouble with law enforcement. For another client, I finished estimating her husband's income to provide the court with information about how much child support he can pay. He is paid through zelle and venmo and does not receive formal paychecks. He also does a lot of work under the table. I reviewed his bank statements to determine how much he makes weekly so the attorneys on this case could ask for more child support. For another client I helped coordinate with our Elder Health and Welfare department to assist her with obtaining a new MassHealth plan. Finally, I confirmed the 2 divorces I filed motions to dismiss for were accepted by the court. Overall, I've learned a lot from this internship. While I've seen issues within the family court system including judges favoring fathers and language access issues, I've also been able to help survivors of domestic abuse. I was able to assist a client in obtaining a two-year restraining order, giving her peace of mind to live her life safely. For another client she was empowered by filing her complaint for divorce. She has a restraining order and so do her children against her husband because of the abuse. She said when she told her kids they were getting divorced they cheered. So, while there were challenges, I'm really glad I was able to help make clients lives better.