



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Legal Aid Chicago

**Update 1:** This week marks the beginning of the third week of my time with Legal Aid Chicago! The atmosphere has been so supportive and collaborative. I have been able to attend case acceptance meetings where the attorneys and paralegals get together to discuss cases that the team should accept or have accepted and the next steps they should take in addressing their clients' issues. It has been interesting to hear everyone bounce ideas around and offer their support on particularly hard cases.

I have been able to research and write both a demand letter and a reasonable accommodations request for the same client. In the demand letter, we are asking that the building management allow the client to break their lease without paying the fee due to the failure of the landlord to keep the property in accordance with HUD's housing quality standards. In the reasonable accommodations request, the client's disability is affected by the conditions in their unit and it would be in line with the fair housing act to allow the client to obtain moving papers and retain their housing choice voucher to find safer housing. I am really excited about the prospects of this case and helping our client move.

This week, I will begin drafting a request for discovery to opposing counsel for a case that requires testimony and a memo about whether punitive damages and damages for emotional distress can be claimed under the Consumer Fraud Act. I am really excited to begin working on these cases.

My mentor and supervisor have been incredibly helpful throughout my learning process, and I am so grateful for their guidance. I look forward to working with them this summer.

I am so excited to see what is in store for the rest of my time at Legal Aid Chicago!

**Update 2:** I am coming up on my fifth week at Legal Aid Chicago and I feel so lucky to be learning about housing law in such a supportive and communicative environment. I also have



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loved being able to talk to the other practice group attorneys who work at Legal Aid Chicago to get a more expansive understanding of the different kinds of work and opportunities that are available at this organization. It has been so nice to be able to meet other DePaul University College of Law alumni working in public interest law.

Last week, I finished my memo on what damages one can get under the Consumer Fraud Act. Additionally, my supervisor sent in the discovery request that I drafted to opposing counsel. It's been insightful to learn how to communicate with opposing counsel and the particular wording one needs to use in discovery requests and motions.

This week, I will be able to watch my supervisor give an argument on a motion to dismiss under the CARES act for the case I drafted the discovery request for. I am very excited to be able to observe him in court.

I am so excited to see what is in store for the rest of my time at Legal Aid Chicago!

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**Update 3:** I value hands-on experience so deeply and Legal Aid Chicago has provided me with the opportunity to just that. I am coming up on my 7th week at Legal Aid Chicago, and this week I will be conducting my first home visit with my supervisor to obtain evidence to help our client in our bench trial. Last week, I assisted with intakes concerning housing discrimination and called my client to obtain details to help me draft our demand letter to the client's property manager.

This week, I am planning to volunteer at one of Legal Aid Chicago's legal clinics in the city. I am very excited to work face to face with the clients and assist them with their legal issues. I am hoping this experience will increase my communication skills and allow me to conduct better intakes in the future. Public interest work is crucial, and I am so glad that I am able to give back to my community through working with Legal Aid Chicago and its clinics.

I am so excited for what this week has in store for me!

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**Update 4:** Working at Legal Aid Chicago's North Lawndale clinic has been my favorite experience thus far. Being able to talk to clients face to face and be able to provide them with advice in real time is invaluable. I was able to talk to clients, hear their issues, and bring their issues back to the attorneys to figure out what the client's best course of action would be. The pro bono group at Legal Aid Chicago is incredibly well run and the attorneys are so supportive and intelligent. I feel so lucky to have had the opportunity to work alongside such passionate advocates.

This week, I have continued to conduct client intakes and issue spotting before presenting a client's case to the attorneys. I am also working on a very interesting porting case that has required me to call housing authorities in Wisconsin to help a client move to Chicago. I am now drafting a demand letter to ensure that our client can stay in the city and retain their subsidized housing.



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It has been eye opening to see bureaucracy in action and understand how affordable housing in Cook County operates. I have really been enjoying the work I am doing and I plan to continue to volunteer at Legal Aid Chicago's clinics during the next semester.

Although my time at Legal Aid Chicago is almost over, I will never forget the experience I have gained and the amazing people I have worked with. I plan to continue exploring the public interest field and volunteer as much as I can.

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**Update 5:** This summer has equipped me with the tools to go forward in my legal career with confidence. Working for **Legal Aid Chicago** was such a wonderful experience and a great first introduction to the legal field. Over the course of ten weeks with the organization, I had a first-hand look into what public interest lawyers are able to accomplish and how hard they work for their clients. There were setbacks and miscommunications, but every lawyer I worked with at Legal Aid Chicago could see it through with grace, patience, and humility. The attorneys at Legal Aid Chicago are incredibly communicative, supportive, and intelligent. It was such a pleasure to be able to observe their craft through their communications with clients and the motion hearings I was able to attend.

My mentor and supervisor gave me the opportunity to draft multiple reasonable accommodation requests and demand letters that allowed us to communicate with landlords and housing authorities to demand better conditions for our clients and ensure that the entities were complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act. It was an amazing feeling knowing that the work I was doing had a real impact, both for the client and making my mentors' lives a little easier. Through these letters, I became familiar with the concise and strategic language attorneys use to convince adverse parties of our stance and the legal ramifications of their inaction. I became very familiar with different types of housing vouchers and the laws that protect tenants. It was fantastic to do a deep dive into an area of the law that interested me after just getting a sample of it in my property class last spring.

I was also able to communicate with clients on a one-on-one basis. This was the highlight of my summer. I talked to clients about their legal issues and got all the information I could through concise communication and meticulous questioning to ensure that the case notes I created would be thorough and to the point for the attorneys who read them. Additionally, I could go back to the client and convey the information I got from the attorneys and answer the questions they may have had. Through this experience, I became more comfortable speaking with clients and choosing my wording carefully to not offend my clients and make sure that they felt comfortable sharing their stories with me.

Legal Aid Chicago is an amazing organization, and I am so lucky to have been a part of it for as long as I was. I am so grateful for all the attorneys there, the work that they do, and the fact that they took a chance on me for the summer. I will never forget the work that I did, and I will take all the skills I learned with me as I continue my career.

I want to thank Legal Aid Chicago again for a wonderful summer. I look forward to working with them in the future! Thank you to **Equal Justice America** for funding my summer as well.