



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	New York Legal Assistance Group

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**Update 1:** I am approaching the end of my third week interning in the Special Education Unit at the New York Legal Assistance Group. So far, I have learned a lot about the world of special education law, and I am eager to continue expanding my knowledge.

During my first week, I had the privilege of attending a status conference at the District Court for S.D.N.Y. My fellow intern and I witnessed attorneys from the Department of Education on one side and attorneys from Advocates for Children and private attorneys on the other side discuss the implementation of a past settlement.

I have also had the opportunity to listen to attorneys conduct intakes on potential clients. This has exposed me to common problems faced in the New York City Public Schools for students with disabilities. I am excited to begin conducting my own intakes shortly.

In addition to intakes, I have assisted my supervising attorneys on briefs. I conducted research and edited her briefs. It has been exciting piecing together what I learned during 1L and how it plays out in practice.

I am immensely grateful for this opportunity and cannot wait to see where the rest of the summer will take me!

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**Update 2:** I am approaching the end of my fifth week interning in the Special Education Unit for the New York Legal Assistance Group. I have continued to learn more about the world of special education law. I recently assisted in drafting an affidavit. I learned about what information is included in an affidavit and refined my writing abilities. I also attended the meeting with the attorney and the witness where we enhanced my draft with the input of the witness. I also completed my first Due Process Complaint that will be used to initiate an impartial hearing. I learned a lot about what information to include in a DPC and how to craft my client's story. I am becoming more familiar with the special education law vernacular and the data that



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accompanies students. My most exciting endeavor thus far was accompanying a parent on a tour of a D75 school. I enjoyed talking with parent and learning more about her child. The school tour gave me insight into what D75 schools look like in NY and the services that they offer.

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**Update 3:** I am approaching the end of my seventh week interning in the Special Education Unit for the New York Legal Assistance Group. Summer is flying by! I have continued to learn more about the world of special education law. I recently had the opportunity to observe a hearing for a client whose case I had assisted on. It was exciting to hear the opening statement that I drafted being read before the Impartial Hearing Officer. Additionally, I enjoyed watching the witnesses testify and be cross-examined because I had listened in on their preparation with my supervising attorney. The most exciting news is that the IHO found in our client's favor! I also have been working on a due process complaint for the student whose mother I accompanied on a school tour. I continue to work on writing each client's story in a clear and compelling way. It has been interesting to piece together the school visit, the IEP, and school and medical documents to craft my client's story. I hope to conduct more school visits in the future.

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**Update 4:** I am nearing the end of my ninth (!) week interning at the New York Legal Assistance Group in the Special Education Unit. I have continued to learn more about the world of special education law. Time has been flying by and I cannot believe that I am nearing the end of my time as an intern. My time recently has been filled with many intakes and client calls. I have enjoyed getting to know the clients that request our services and the joy that comes from finding the assistance they are looking for. Too often people are left to fight alone against a system that is foreign to them. I also have been working on finalizing a research memo. The State Administrative Procedure Act for New York governs how the New York Education Department can promulgate rules. It is an important way that parents and advocates can challenge regulations because it offers specific procedures that NYSED must follow.

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**Update 5:** It is hard to believe that my summer internship with the New York Legal Assistance Group in their Special Education Unit has come to an end. My summer was full of learning about special education law, as well as legal skills that will aid me in any type of law I choose to pursue.

My work with NYLAG was predominantly focused on parents unilaterally placing their children in private schools. These cases required the three prongs of the Burlington test to be met. First, parents had to prove that the public school placement was not appropriate for their child. Second, parents had to show that the private school they had chosen was tailored to meet their child's needs. Lastly, parents had to prove the equity prong by showing that they had cooperated with the district to find an appropriate public school placement. These cases gave me insight into how the New York City public school system operates. I was not previously familiar with the New York Department of Education, but I was able to learn more about their procedures and their adherence to the State Administrative Procedure Act (SAPA). Under SAPA, NYSED is required to provide time for notice and comment so that the public is aware of their rights. Understanding SAPA will help my future career, even if not education specific because it applies to all agencies in New York.



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My work this summer also gave me the opportunity to interact with clients. I spoke with clients on intake calls, accompanied them on school tours, and worked with them on affidavits. This experience allowed me to grow in my ability to communicate with clients and effectively understand their needs. Learning how to have productive conversations with clients helps facilitate Hearing firsthand from clients about their struggles gave me insight into problems within the special education system in New York. I hope to use this knowledge in the future to guide my own practice of the law and advocate for the special needs community. I am thankful for all the opportunities this summer gave me!