



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Legal Aid Chicago

**Update 1:** As I wrap up my third week at Legal Aid Chicago, I'm thrilled to share my first update. The opportunity to be a part of the Family Law and Education Law teams at Legal Aid Chicago has been incredible. In this short span, I've already gained a wealth of knowledge, and I'm looking forward to seeing what the rest of the summer has in store.

Last week, I was brought in to help with a (rare!) Hague case that a team of family law attorneys are working on. A Hague case is a case filed under the Hague Abduction Convention, an international treaty that aims to protect children from international child abduction and allows parents to seek the return of a child who has been wrongfully taken across international borders.

I was able to attend the pre-trial conference at the federal courthouse, help with trial prep, and sit in on our client's (rather long!) deposition today. It has been so interesting working on a case that involves aspects of both child and family law—two areas I am very interested in.

I feel lucky to be part of a team doing such meaningful work and to be learning so much along the way.

I am deeply grateful to Equal Justice America for their support in funding my summer experience while attending Loyola University Chicago School of Law!

**Update 2:** Today marks the end of the fifth week of my internship at Legal Aid Chicago, and I'm so happy to share my second update. Since my last update, I have gained even more experience in and out of the courtroom.

This week, I stood up in court as a 711-licensed student attorney for the first time! Speaking in front of a judge on behalf of a client was exciting (but mostly terrifying!). I also had the opportunity to observe several more depositions (two of which were of expert witnesses) for the Hague case I am assisting with. It was fascinating to see how much care, planning, and



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

intentionality goes into crafting the questions for a deposition, especially with expert witnesses. I also dove into much of the case law surrounding the admissibility of expert testimony as I drafted a legal memo for a potential Daubert motion in the case.

As each week goes by, I am grateful for how much I am getting to learn and experience in my internship. I am especially thankful for the mentorship, guidance, and support from my supervising attorneys. I feel fortunate to learn from such skilled, driven, compassionate attorneys.

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**Update 3:** Wow, I cannot believe I'm more than halfway through my internship at Legal Aid Chicago and sharing my third update. In just this last week, I feel I have learned more than I have in my entire internship thus far. The Hague case that I have been helping with went to trial at the end of the week, and I was to attend in person and help the team prep for it by attending the last few depositions of fact witnesses and putting together deposition abstracts for trial.

Witnessing an in-person federal trial, sitting at the attorney's table, and listening in on the team as they strategized evidentiary objections and drafted/tweaked their cross-examination was the best learning experience I could have asked for. All week, I was amazed at the talent, skill, and compassion of the team of attorneys at Legal Aid Chicago and grateful to be learning so much from them. Seeing Naeem Nulwala give a compelling opening statement and cross-examine the opposing party and Mallory Morgan compassionately counsel and conduct a direct examination of our client was incredible. I especially had a full-circle moment seeing my trial-intensive instructor, Melissa Staas, in action, making countless successful evidentiary objections. I was also so amazed at Legal Aid Chicago's social work team, who ensured there was always someone to sit with our client, made sure she was emotionally cared for, and helped her through the difficulty and stress of a trial like this.

Overall, it was a chaotic week, but I am so grateful to be doing this work and look forward to continuing the trial this upcoming week.

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**Update 4:** As I'm approaching the end of my time at Legal Aid Chicago, I am happy to report I am still growing, learning, and experiencing so much. This last week, I stood in court again to present a motion on behalf of a client. With each court appearance, I am finding my nerves slowly easing and my confidence growing.

I am grateful to Legal Aid Chicago and Equal Justice America for providing me with these continued opportunities.

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**Update 5:** I am excited (and a bit bittersweet) to share my final #EJAFellowUpdate of the summer. Last week, I completed my internship at Legal Aid Chicago and was left feeling many emotions.

I am sad to be leaving such a fantastic team. While at Legal Aid Chicago, I worked on the Family Law and Education Law teams and was lucky to learn from three amazing supervisors (shoutout to Maddie, Mallory, and Teresa!) I also met and learned from so many others who make up the



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team of people working to help the clients at Legal Aid Chicago. From the paralegals to the social workers, I have a newfound appreciation for all the staff dedicated to supporting our client's many needs. I felt fortunate to work at such a large legal aid organization with over one hundred attorneys working in all civil areas, from Immigration & Workers' Rights to Housing.

I am grateful, however, for all the learning opportunities I had over the summer. Working on the Education Law team, I learned a lot about Title IX issues and how advocates can help students navigate the reporting, investigation, and complaint process. I also saw how advocates can help students with disabilities get the services and support they need in the classroom. On the Family law team, I was introduced to an entirely new area of law for me – the domestic relations and domestic violence courts – where I learned how to advocate for survivors of domestic violence and get them the things they need, whether that's a divorce, child custody or support, or maintenance. Lastly, I am very grateful for the opportunity to observe and help on a federal child abduction case from start to finish and learn from the team of attorneys on the case.

I am also proud of the growth I accomplished over the summer. I gained so much experience both inside and outside the courtroom. With my 7/11 license, I was able to stand in court many times – for statuses, motion presentments, and case management meetings – and become more comfortable speaking in front of a judge, advocating for a client, and working with opposing counsel.

Lastly, I am feeling very hopeful and motivated. Over the summer, I felt constantly supported by the team of attorneys in the Children & Families Practice group and the amazing group of interns that I worked with over the summer (pictured above). From the many experiences I had over the summer, I am hopeful and excited about the work I will be able to do after I graduate from law school next year. I am more motivated than ever to finish my legal studies and begin my career serving and helping others who need it most. The work this summer was often challenging and emotional but incredibly fulfilling. I am very grateful to Equal Justice America for funding my summer experience. For anyone interested in supporting EJA and my summer experience, please donate.