



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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LAW SCHOOL	Michigan State University College of Law
ORGANIZATION	Legal Services of South Central Michigan

Update 1: This summer I am working as a law clerk at Legal Services of South Central Michigan. LSSCM is a legal aid organization that provides legal services to low-income people and people in need. Some of our clients come from several vulnerable populations including the elderly, domestic violence survivors, and indigent people. Without LSSCM many of the people in the community would go without access to an attorney and other legal resources. I have learned so much within my first two weeks about the importance and need for legal services. My days so far consist of meeting with clients, shadowing attorneys, conducting legal research, and attending community meetings. I recently attended a community meeting on combatting violence, especially gun violence, in the community. LSSCM not only provides legal services within the community, but the organization is also active in the community helping people with community initiatives. Part of my summer funding is provided by Equal Justice America, which is an organization dedicated to providing legal resources to low-income people nationwide. 80% of those living in poverty who require civil legal services don't have access to it. It is important for Equal Justice America to secure financial ability to continue to support law students, attorneys, and future EJA Fellows. Please donate to support an essential program.

Update 2: In the first month as a law clerk at Legal Services of South Central Michigan, I have learned a great deal about the challenges people face accessing the legal system and seeking justice. Last week our office attended the Ypsilanti Juneteenth Celebration to do expungement work and spread the word about our services. People make mistakes and work to better themselves but sometimes they have to forgo opportunities because of their criminal record. Expungement work is important because it can bolster the prospects of employment and provide people with peace of mind. We were able to help several people sign up for expungement screenings. Many people seemed grateful that expungement is even an option and thanked us for the work we were doing. It was great meeting the people in the community and finding out how we can best assist people in our capacity as a legal services program. It was also helpful to meet the other nonprofit organizations to learn about the services they're providing to the community and community-based organizations to learn about the initiatives



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they're working on to improve their community. The passion the people have for the community of Ypsilanti left me inspired and I will continue to work hard to serve their community. Our office made some great connections and even talked about collaborating with some of the other nonprofit organizations and community organizations. I have no doubt that these connections will serve the people well.

Update 3: Last month I shadowed our attorneys during our walk-in clinic. This month the attorneys have allowed me to meet with clients one on one during our clinic and consult with the attorneys to give legal advice. A few weeks ago, I met with a prospective client that had a housing issue. My supervising attorney allowed me to take the lead in the case. After meeting with the prospective client, I recommended to my supervising attorney that we should advise her on her case. My supervising attorney agreed. This week I was able to help negotiate a settlement for the client that saved her housing for her and her children. Leading a case from its inception to a settlement was a transformative experience. I learned the challenges that attorneys face daily while handling a case. My work on this case strengthened my resolve to become an attorney and ignited my passion for public interest work. The client I met with was low income and formerly homeless, so saving her housing was of the utmost importance. As a low-income person, her access to legal resources was limited and we were her last hope. This experience taught me the importance of a Legal Services organization.

Update 4: In the past few weeks, my supervising attorney has encouraged me to participate in several court hearings. I have also observed several court hearings during my own time. This week I met with some of our clients to advise them of their rights and help them formulate arguments for their hearings in cases which we could not represent them. For the clients that we did represent, I appeared with them at court. My supervising attorney even let me take the lead in settlement negotiations with opposing counsel in one of the cases. Being in a court room allowed me to see how important it is for people to have attorneys advocate on their behalf. Often times the average person, especially people from vulnerable populations, do not understand what is going on in the court room or why they are appearing at court. Being in the court room was a great experience and an excellent opportunity to learn more about the legal field. I am happy that we were able to secure an interpreter for a refugee family we are helping so the family finally had their chance to be heard in court. The language barrier has been difficult for the family when dealing with their landlord and the housing agency.

Update 5: My internship ended last week, and it is a bittersweet ending. I learned so much from the amazing attorneys at Legal Services of South Central Michigan. I enjoyed every aspect of my summer internship from going to court, counseling clients, attending impactful training, and assisting with community initiatives. I had the pleasure of speaking with several judges this summer in their courtrooms and speaking with a multitude of attorneys in the Public Interest field that share my passion for social justice. I hope I made a significant impact on the people I worked with because they made a significant impact on me. My internship this summer has strengthened my resolve and continuously ignited my passion in Public Interest work. There are many people who do not get the justice they're seeking because they lack access to an attorney and other legal resources. LSSCM is an integral part of providing services for people in need. Thank you to my supervising attorney Lou for believing in me and giving me the freedom to



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work with so many attorneys and work on multiple projects in the office. Thank you for allowing me opportunities to grow as a legal professional and listening to my opinions about the clients. Thank you to Tish the managing attorney for supporting me in my work and for always making time for my questions. Thank you to the other staff attorneys Jill, Toi, Min, Alex and Tracey for allowing me to work with you and for helping me grow as a legal professional. Thank you to the support staff Tanya, Nicole, A, and Carlie for being such a great help and assisting me with any questions that I had. Finally, thank you to Callie Dendrinis the attorney I worked with the most this summer. From day one Callie believed in my abilities as a law clerk and as a future attorney. She allowed me to structure my work in a way that I would receive the most from my internship. Callie let me take the lead on any task or assignment where I felt comfortable. She encouraged me to get involved with cases, even cases with other attorneys, where she saw an opportunity for growth. She constantly pushed me to get better and she provided support where it was needed. Callie always listened and made sure that I was meeting my summer goals. She also made sure that as a supervisor my expectations were being met not only by herself but by the office. As I return to school for my 2L year this week, I express my gratitude. Thank you for a wonderful summer!