



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Brooklyn Defender Services – Family Defense Practice

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#### Update 1:

After finishing my first year at New York Law School, I am excited to share some updates. I have been selected to be an Equal Justice America Summer 2024 fellow. This summer, I am working as a summer legal intern with Brooklyn Defender Services in the Family Defense Practice.

I will be working with supervising attorneys to represent parents facing removal of their children in family court. My work will include interviewing clients at intake, preparing client affidavits, drafting motions and pleadings, researching legal issues, and helping attorneys prepare for hearings.

As I finish my second week at BDS, I am continuously learning about the root causes of family separation, such as poverty, housing instability, and physical or mental health concerns, and how we as advocates can help parents navigate the complex legal system. I am seeing first-hand how important it is to have a client-centered approach in our work while working to prevent the re-traumatization of families in a largely punitive system.

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#### Update 2:

As the summer has moved along, I have gotten deeper into the work at Brooklyn Defender Services through court observations, work on motions, trial preparation, and research assignments for open cases. I am getting a lot of first-hand experience observing hearings in family court, which has been very interesting to participate in.

This week, I worked on preparing for a simultaneous permanency and motion hearing for a client. I prepared a digest for trial based on the ACS case notes available and used that to draft cross examination questions for the case planner during the hearings. To do this effectively, I also conducted research into legal arguments we were using to try to further our case, such as how certain factors in determining family reunification are defined in the law. It is exciting to



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learn how to prepare for trial and how to begin analyzing evidence in a way to be able to further our client's case in court.

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### **Update 3:**

I am officially over halfway done with my summer internship at Brooklyn Defender Services. As the summer continues, I have continued learning new skills and expanding my interest in litigation work.

Last week, I worked on preparing the defense's case for a fact-finding hearing in family court. I started by looking through all the evidence available and formed our theory of the case and the petitioner's anticipated theory of the case. I then conducted research into the case law to support our position, drafted direct examination questions for our client, drafted cross examination questions for other witnesses, and wrote a first draft of our final summation for our case.

It is exciting to continue to learn how to prepare for trial. I am looking forward to being able to work with my supervising attorney to prepare our client for this hearing and participate in the fact-finding hearing on the record myself later in the summer.

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### **Update 4:**

My summer internship at Brooklyn Defender Services is quickly coming to an end. I have really enjoyed my work this summer and I am excited to close out my final projects in the final two weeks of the internship. I am especially looking forward to preparing cross examination questions of case planners for a few hearings coming up shortly. I will also be working with clients to prepare their direct testimony for their hearings.

This week, I was also able to shadow arraignments in Brooklyn criminal court with BDS attorneys in the criminal practice. This was a great learning experience to be able to compare and differentiate how civil and criminal courts operate. I shadowed an attorney who works largely with felony cases and was able to sit in on interviews with clients in holding before bail arguments were made in front of the judge. It was really interesting to see the diversity of cases that were brought and how the DA's office took different approaches for each case.

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### **Update 5:**

I have now completed my summer internship at Brooklyn Defender Services. This was such a positive experience, and I am excited to have finished the first position of my legal career.

Throughout my internship, I completed the typical lawyerly work that I expected, such as drafting motions and affidavits, researching complex legal issues, and preparing materials and evidence for court. However, the best part of this summer was being able to work directly with clients and really understand the impact that our work can have on the families we work with



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and the communities around them. It was incredible to see how the attorneys build and maintain trust with their clients by engaging in client-centered advocacy.

In my last few weeks, I was also able to begin learning some litigation skills by going on the record at various hearings in family court. I was able to offer evidence to the court, cross-examine witnesses on the stand, and accept a settlement agreement for a client. I have learned that I really enjoy litigation and am excited to continue honing these skills through my future work as a lawyer.

I am grateful to have worked with incredible mentors through this experience, and I couldn't have asked for a better entrance to working in the legal field.

To help Equal Justice America support future law students working toward the goal of providing equal access to justice for all, please donate.