



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Sarah Cusick
LAW SCHOOL	Suffolk Law
ORGANIZATION	Community Legal Aid

Update 1: I am excited to announce that I was chosen as a 2024 Equal Justice America Fellow for my summer with Community Legal Aid (CLA).

Equal Justice America is a non-profit organization dedicated to getting law students and new lawyers involved in legal aid programs such as CLA. While at CLA I will be spending my time in the unit of Civil Legal Aid for Victims of Crime (CLAVC). CLAVC assists crime victims with related civil legal issues throughout Massachusetts. Unlike criminal law where everyone is guaranteed the right to legal representation, civil cases do not provide the same protections. Community legal aid works to provide civil legal advice and representation to those in the community who cannot afford it.

During my first week at CLA I have been able to observe court proceedings and processes, start research projects, and learn a ton about family law in Massachusetts! Being in CLAVC will give me the exposure to multiple specialties such as immigration, housing, family law, and others. So far, my time at CLA has been full of learning and growth of my legal education. I am so grateful to be spending time with a wonderful community-based organization and I look forward to the next eight weeks!

Update 2: As I'm almost halfway through my summer with community legal aid I've had amazing opportunities to observe different kinds of court proceedings and really see firsthand how poverty affects every aspect of someone's life. I started this summer not being sure whether litigation was something I wanted to pursue, but after watching the legal aid attorneys in court, advocating for their clients I'm not sure I could see myself doing anything else.

It's hard to imagine what people would do without access to legal aid organizations.



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My time with community legal aid has so far cemented my desire to continue working in public interest work. I have enjoyed shadowing a lot of family law court processes and learning a new topic every week in our CLA provided lunch and learns. The contradictions in our system when it comes to being impoverished is bothersome. Some benefits require you to work and only make a minimum amount of income- requiring people to remain under the poverty line in order to continue receiving benefits- with no grace period or wiggle room. The wait lists for housing and immigration related processes are mind boggling. I look forward to becoming an attorney and using this experience to serve clients with a wholistic mindset, taking into consideration all people have to go through to find help or some sort of "justice."

Update 3: I am sad thinking about the fact that I am halfway through my summer internship with Community Legal Aid. So far, I have enjoyed every moment of this opportunity and can truly see myself pursuing a career in legal aid after law school.

My supervisors throughout this experience have taught me so much just by allowing me to observe and then ask questions. I recently got the opportunity to observe a mediation and entering of an agreement between a landlord and tenant. It was difficult to imagine the parties being able to agree to anything resembling fair for either of them without the assistance of their attorneys- further emphasizing how important civil legal aid is. The power imbalance between landlord and tenant is not something I will ever be able to ignore going forward.

I have especially been enjoying my time learning about family law and how different the court system treats family related cases compared to everything else. I went into law school with an interest in family law and this opportunity has certainly allowed that interest to flourish while exposing me to other areas of the law as well. I would recommend any law student interested in public interest work to seek an internship or work opportunity in legal aid.

Update 4: As I enter my second to last week as an intern for community legal aid, I reflect on how much I have learned about how the system functions compared to what we learn in law school. I started law school believing that I wanted to get involved in criminal cases but my time this summer has been leading me to believe I might actually want to do civil work.

I've had opportunities to observe a jury trial, from voir dire to verdict. I've been able to observe a landlord tenant mediation, motions in front of judges, and negotiations. I've learned that days in court include a lot of waiting and listening. I've been given research opportunities and chances to write up objections to request for production of documents. I'm so grateful for my experience this summer as it has definitively pointed me in the right direction for my future.



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Update 5: My summer with Community Legal Aid has come to a close and I am so grateful for the opportunity to work alongside amazing advocates and for the work they do every day. Going into law school I imagined myself working in criminal law as my passion was for working with survivors of sexual and domestic violence, I never even contemplated the civil realm. After this summer I see myself heading more towards a career in civil law, as I don't see myself becoming a defense attorney or prosecutor.

CLA put on weekly lunch and learns with each unit of their office to teach the interns about the work they were doing across the community. This was a great opportunity for us to network and to learn about the different units. I had no idea we even had farms in MA, let alone migrant farm workers who are exploited through wage theft, unsafe work conditions, and threats of deportation- but I learned this through one of our lunch and learns. I had no idea that there were government funded programs that help victims of domestic violence afford to move to safer housing.

Starting this experience the thought of litigating in front of a courtroom felt terrifying and unlikely. This summer has made me feel differently and I believe one day I will be in the courtroom litigating on behalf of clients. I look forward to making a difference in people's lives. My time with CLA has been so full of learning. I got the opportunity to join weekly team intake meetings, watch our attorneys meet with clients and go to court, I was able to do legal research about genuinely interesting topics. Throughout my time, my supervisors kept me engaged and ensured all my questions were answered, even my very Google-able ones- but I just loved talking to my supervisors! The work they do every day is life changing and in some cases lifesaving and after this summer I am extremely open to a career in legal aid after law school.