



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>LAW SCHOOL</b>	University of Chicago
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Mandel Legal Aid Clinic

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### Update 1:

In my first summer as a law student at The University of Chicago Law School, I'm interning at the Housing Initiative Transactional Clinic. Clients of the clinic include nonprofit, community-based housing developers and housing cooperatives. We're collaborating with clients and professionals to bring affordable housing and mixed-use developments to life.

I am honored to say I was selected as a 2024 Equal Justice America Fellow, for which I am extremely grateful. @EqualJusticeAmerica is a non-profit organization that helps people by putting law students and lawyers to work for legal aid programs like the clinic. This is not only to provide pro bono legal assistance to those in need, but also to show law students and lawyers alike the value and importance of providing legal aid to vulnerable communities.

Going into this internship, I anticipated gaining experience with transactional work, a nice opportunity amidst a law school curriculum largely centered around litigation. However, as I've begun this work, I've gained greater appreciation for the impact of my involvement and the opportunity to make positive differences for the people in my community.

Grateful for this opportunity and the support from @EqualJusticeAmerica

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### Update 2:

It's time for another [#EJAFellowUpdate](#)! As I've settled into my role as a legal intern at the Housing Initiative Transactional Clinic at The University of Chicago Law School, I've found myself engaging in meaningful work supporting non-profit housing developers and cooperatives.



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While much of law school is focused on the litigation side of the work available to a lawyer, this summer has given me experience with different forms of transactional work.

More importantly, it has given me the opportunity to support disadvantaged communities in my area. By offering pro bono services to support these projects, we are able to help ensure that families with lower incomes have access to affordable housing. One thing we have been able to do for our clients is to help them navigate the bureaucracies in order to see their projects come to fruition so as to achieve the goal of affordable housing even as gentrification overtakes many of the neighborhoods of Chicago

With *City of Grants Pass v. Johnson* having been handed down, it may be more apparent than ever just how important access to affordable housing is for our disadvantaged communities. That is why we need to leverage our talents to support them and why the work done by [Equal Justice America](#) is so important.

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## Update 3:

[#EJAFellowUpdate](#) time! Even while the news is focused on other events, the world keeps needing work in arenas like housing. It is perhaps more important in times of political strife to think of those in need and how we can help them today. It goes without saying that working together will make us stronger and closer as a community. If we can work together while working for the good of the less fortunate, all the better. While we might disagree on plenty of things, we can agree that housing is an absolute necessity for everyone.

My work this summer, as I've mentioned before in other posts, is supporting nonprofit housing initiatives in various capacities with the housing initiative transactional clinic. Together, we've been able to provide support in various forms, whether through navigating financing, providing legal advice towards solutions, revising documents, or helping to file applications with the government.

I truly appreciate this opportunity to work for my community in a way that truly makes a difference on a larger scale.

Grateful for this opportunity and the support from [@EqualJusticeAmerica](#)

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## Update 4:

It's time for one more [#EJAFellowUpdate](#)! Over much of the past two weeks, I've been assisting a client with the bylaws by which they run their organization. I helped revamp their board of



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directors and establish a search committee that would locate and evaluate potential nominees to their board. I dusted off my computer programming skills a little bit as I went about writing the “code” by which their organization was to be run. It was a rewarding experience that involved both insight into the organization’s business and also the skills of class-based programming that I gained so many years ago.

I was also able to work directly with a different client providing legal advice on his low-income housing project. This was great not only because of the leveraging of my interpersonal and customer service skills from past jobs, but also my problem-solving and research skills of both my undergraduate and legal education. Further, it was a very rewarding experience to be able to communicate with a client directly and answer his questions to help him resolve the difficulties that arose in his project. By resolving those issues, it helped him along the process of providing accessible housing to more people.

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## **Update 5:**

It’s time for the last #EJAFellowUpdate! It’s the end of the summer, and with that, the end of my time as an Equal Justice America fellow. However, it won’t be the end of my time with the Housing Initiative Transactional Clinic, where I intend to continue working into the academic year.

With this being the last one, let’s make it a recap. Initially, I expected just to gain experience in transactional law, which contrasts with the litigation focus of our curriculum, in the hopes of teasing out where my own career interests lie. However, this internship has shown me the profound impact of my work and its importance for the community. A significant highlight of my summer is being named a 2024 Equal Justice America Fellow. This fellowship, awarded by Equal Justice America, supports law students working in legal aid programs, emphasizing the importance of pro bono legal work for underserved communities. I am deeply grateful for this recognition and the chance to contribute to impactful legal assistance.

Throughout the summer, I’ve engaged in various aspects of transactional work, including financing, legal advice, document revision, and government filings. I’ve also had the opportunity to directly support clients, such as helping a nonprofit overhaul their organizational bylaws and assisting a low-income housing project with legal advice. These tasks allowed me to apply both my legal knowledge and interpersonal skills, making a tangible difference in our clients' projects. My work with the Housing Initiative Transactional Clinic at Mandel Legal Aid has been both fulfilling and enlightening, reinforcing the value of legal support for disadvantaged communities. I’m grateful for the support from Equal Justice America and the chance to contribute meaningfully to affordable housing initiatives. I look forward to the opportunity to put the experience I gained this summer to use at the clinic this year. I am also grateful to the University of Chicago Law School for the opportunity to engage in work at the clinic and the close mentorship provided by the clinical faculty.

As I continue my legal education and on into my career, I will be sure to keep in mind those who are in need.

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