



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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ORGANIZATION	Legal Services of Eastern Michigan

Update 1: Hello all, quick life update from me. Just over a month ago I finished my first year at the University of Michigan Law School and it has been a great one! I have learned quite a bit and am now getting the opportunity to apply that knowledge by working at Legal Services of Eastern Michigan in Flint. I have started working on Landlord-Tenant disputes and just this week got my first opportunities to conduct client interviews and outreach. So far my experience has been wonderful as I have learned so much about housing laws and just in general about being a lawyer from my supervising attorneys. I look forward to what my summer will bring and am excited to have this great opportunity.

Part of what has made this opportunity possible is that I am a recipient of the Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship. EJA partners with legal aid organizations around the country and provides funding to law students who work with these organizations. I am very appreciative of their mission to help provide legal services to indigent individuals and am honored to be one of their fellows this summer.

Update 2: It's time for another update on my summer as an Equal Justice America Fellow. The last couple of weeks I have had the opportunity to do more direct client interaction by taking the lead on some of Legal Services of Eastern Michigan's Housing Clinic interviews and by calling clients to give them advice on their case. Additionally, I have had the opportunity to work with opposing counsel to resolve cases in ways that include, reaching agreements that get our clients repairs that they have been asking their landlords for, getting them more time to move out of their housing, or simply having the case dismissed because the landlord is not in compliance with Flint's rental laws.

These last couple weeks have been a great growth opportunity for me and I have enjoyed the opportunity to take on these responsibilities, which in turn helps our clients resolve their cases. This is especially meaningful to me knowing that 80% of people living in poverty that require



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civil legal services do not have access to those services, so I am glad that I am able to use this summer to provide even the smallest bit of help.

Update 3: When I interviewed at Legal Services of Eastern Michigan, one of the questions I asked the panel of attorneys interviewing me was “What is the most challenging and most rewarding part of your job?” The answer that stuck with me is the one my now supervising attorney gave, which was “The clients, and the clients.” This has stuck with me especially over the last couple of weeks as we’ve had some tense client interactions, and some others that leave you wondering what the client was thinking. While these moments do leave me feeling like there’s something more I could have done, I am glad to have had the opportunity to learn from these experiences as I know there will be many more moments like this throughout my career. Luckily, I have found that these client moments are the minority of instances. Typically, our clients are great to work with and there is at least some help we can provide them, and I am glad to be a part of an organization that can provide this help. I am doubly grateful that I have the privilege of being an Equal Justice America Fellow, and that I am one of many students this summer helping to provide civil legal services to those who need it most.

Update 4: The last couple of weeks at Legal Services of Eastern Michigan have been the most interesting ones yet! One of the judges whose courtroom we covered had been on vacation for a couple weeks, so his caseload piled up and made for a busy couple of Tuesday court sessions, and Thursday clinic days. This created the need for myself and my fellow intern to take on our own clinic interviews independent of our supervising attorney, and it has been some of the best hands-on learning I’ve had this summer.

Through these experiences I have had the opportunity to reassure myself that I know the law and am able to help our clients but have also made some missteps that will help me both through the last two weeks of my internship, and throughout the rest of my career. Coming into this summer client interaction was the thing I felt the shakiest about doing, but now that I have gained some meaningful experience in that area, I’m excited to finish off my summer and provide the best possible service for our clients. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to work for Legal Services this summer and also be an Equal Justice America Fellow for the summer.

Update 5: Last Friday I finished my summer internship at Legal Services of Eastern Michigan. Looking back at my summer experience, I am extremely grateful that I had the opportunity to both work at Legal Services and to be an Equal Justice America fellow. I spent my summer working on landlord-tenant disputes, which provided me with experience in interviewing/advising clients, negotiating with opposing counsel, and even an opportunity to argue in court last Wednesday!

Providing direct client services for people who truly need it has certainly been a rewarding way to spend my summer, but also has presented its challenges. One of the most valuable lessons I have taken from this summer is that there will be times that there is not much I will be able to do as an advocate and will need to break that bad news to a client. While that’s still not an easy



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conversation, I am glad that I have gotten the exposure to those situations since I will need to deal with that plenty in the future as well.

This summer has also taught me the value of patience while working with clients. Going to court to fight to keep your housing will test anyone's patience, and as a result, some clients did not show us their best side, but given the circumstances that is understandable. Experiencing this first-hand showed me that one of the more important qualities a legal services attorney can have is empathy, and I hope that I showed our clients empathy, and I will strive to continue to show that empathy throughout my career.

Overall, my time at Legal Services of Eastern Michigan was great, and a large part of that was because of the people. First, a fellow University of Michigan student was also an intern at Legal Services, so having her to carpool with made the commute to Flint much more enjoyable, and second, I had some incredible attorney mentors. My supervising attorney provided great opportunities to get hands-on learning and was just a great person to be around, helped by his shared enthusiasm for sports and professional wrestling. Other attorneys in the office also gave me some great advice and work opportunities that will help me well into my career.

I also learned that the resources of organizations like LSEM are very finite, and not enough to provide all the help that is needed for low-income people who are entangled in the civil justice system. If you have the ability to, please consider donating to Equal Justice America to help bolster these organizations resources, and to give law students like me the opportunity to have great summer experiences like I had.