



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

## SUMMER 2024

### EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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<b>LAW SCHOOL</b>	University of Michigan
<b>ORGANIZATION</b>	Veterans Legal Clinic

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**Update 1:** This summer, I have been working at the University of Michigan Law School's Veterans Legal Clinic. It has been gratifying to provide legal aid to those who have served this country, especially since most veterans cannot afford to hire an attorney. For the past few weeks, I have been familiarizing myself with each case, speaking to clients, and researching various legal areas. After finishing my first year in law school, I am excited to implement the legal theories and practices I have learned in these cases!

I am grateful to my two supervising attorneys, Matthew Andres and Carrie Floyd, for being patient as I get up to speed. Their guidance shaped my understanding of the case and provided me with insights of different legal strategies we can take. I am also grateful to our wonderful law clinic administrator, Lesley Rice, for aiding the clinic when dealing with the various courts across Michigan.

As I begin my summer internship, I am excited to see what I can do for our clients, and I hope to make progress on these cases before the summer ends!

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**Update 2:** I am already on week 6 of my internship! This opportunity has been incredibly rewarding, and I am learning more than I could have ever imagined.

Particularly, I enjoy my time interacting with clients and building relationships. Hearing my clients speak about how their military service has impacted their lives has been both humbling and eye-opening. It is even more evident how our work at the University of Michigan Veterans Legal Clinic impacts our community.

Even though I am only halfway through my internship, I have already drafted motions to compel, negotiated settlement agreements, and revised discovery requests. I am preparing for four hearings in the next couple of weeks and depositions later this month. While July is gearing up to be a busy month for the clinic, I am grateful for this opportunity.



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Finally, I am grateful for the time I got to learn from Carrie Floyd, one of my supervising attorneys. She has left for a new role, but her mentorship and guidance will definitely stick with me as I continue this role and move on to my next internship.

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**Update 3:** Even though I am nearing the end of my internship, I am constantly learning something new every day. Specifically, in these past couple of weeks, I have grown my understanding of legal practice.

For example, I had the privilege of arguing a motion in court. While I only got to argue for a couple of minutes, my preparation allowed me to effectively answer questions and advocate for my client. The positive outcome for the client was not just a validation of my efforts but a reminder of the real impact legal advocacy can have on individuals' lives.

Additionally, preparing the client for the hearing was another pivotal learning experience. It involved delving deep into case details, understanding client perspectives, and refining strategies to effectively present our case. This process underscored the critical role of communication and empathy in building strong attorney-client relationships.

I have already used these experiences during my preparation of another hearing I have next week. I only have a couple weeks left of my internship, but I know that there is still so much to do to ensure that the next group of student attorneys is set up for success.

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**Update 4:** I have completed my internship as a Student Attorney at the University of Michigan – Veterans Legal Clinic. These past two weeks, I felt accomplishment and gratitude over this opportunity to help our veterans in their legal matters. I had the privilege of closing out a case, resulting in a positive outcome for my client. I've also focused on finishing up miscellaneous tasks to make sure that our cases are in a good place for the next month.

Additionally, I worked on transfer memos to ensure that the next group of student attorneys understood the events that ensued over the summer and the next steps to focus on during the semester. I remembered the importance of these transfer memos at the beginning of my summer, and I want to make sure that I do my part for the next student attorneys. As I transition out, I am excited for the future student attorneys to recognize what wonderful clients we have at the VLC, and I have no doubt that they will learn as much as I did over the summer.

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**Update 5:** In the past two weeks, I was able to reflect upon my internship that I completed this summer. This experience has allowed me to grow my legal education and work with some incredible people.

This experience allowed me to get a much better understanding of the litigation process. From writing various motions to drafting settlement agreements, I have become a better legal advocate. Additionally, I was able to gain experience in character of discharge determinations and discharge upgrades. While this sort of work was unlike what I was used to, I was grateful for the opportunity. I prepared for hearings and learned how to craft a story. I was happy that I was



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able to get a positive result for one of my clients, but it was disheartening to see how many veterans were struggling to obtain the benefits they earned due to the nature of their discharges. While the government is beginning to make some strides into helping out these veterans, I hope to see more receive that benefits that they require.

Even though my internship was completed a couple of weeks ago, I realize how much I've been thinking about my clients and their cases. I continue to wonder what happened to these clients, but I know that I will not have that closure due to the nature of clinic work. However, I have full faith that the next set of student attorneys will be great advocates. I truly hope that our clients receive the justice that they deserve.

As I move forward in my legal education and career, I hope to take the lessons I learned during this internship. I want to continue to commit to putting my clients' needs and goals at the forefront of my practice. Although I am likely to work in the transactional field rather than in litigation, I believe that being client-centered still results in the best outcomes. My internship experience has solidified this belief, and I am excited to see what is next in store for me!

I want to thank my supervising attorneys, Matthew Andres and Carrie Floyd, for the support they have shown. I also want to thank the VLC administrator, Leslie Rice, for her deep wealth of knowledge. Finally, a big thank you to Equal Justice America for supporting legal aid programs.