



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: The first two weeks of my internship at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A have been an incredible learning experience. From day one, interns were shown the ropes of Kings County Housing Court and entrusted with client contact and caseload management. Each client I interacted with faced an extremely stressful time under the threat of eviction.

Working directly with clients helped me see the magnitude and necessity of legal aid. Conducting intake allowed me to be the client's first interaction with Brooklyn A's representation process. Being able to guide clients through the intake process allowed me to give some assurance and help clients understand they don't have to go through the court process alone. It was in these moments that I realized the true impact of our work – not just legal assistance but also support during an often-confusing process.

Observing the Brooklyn housing court was a reminder that legal aid is the front line for the affordable housing crises. Everyday Brooklyn A's staff attorneys work with clients to avoid eviction and connect them with programs that can assist with affordable housing. Being allowed to assist and learn from these attorneys is invaluable and allows me to build skills to be an effective advocate.

Update 2: Reflecting on the first month of my internship at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A has allowed me to see how much I have learned. Since day one interns were shown the basics of Kings County Housing Court, entrusted with client contact, and daily activities of a staff attorney

Being able to shadow attorneys and assist them in Housing court has allowed me grow and become a better advocate. I am learning how summary proceedings for housing cases are structured and I am able to see the realities of litigating for tenants. This allows me to help clients navigate an often confusing and long process. I recently walked a client through a



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settlement we negotiated with the landlord's attorney. Explaining to them their obligations in the agreement. and how they can advocate for themselves with emergency rental assistance

Working with clients daily and facing new challenges at housing court reminds me how vital legal aid work is. It's not just about winning in court but also making sure the client understands what they are agreeing to and following their wishes, even if it isn't what you think is a good deal. Learning how to be an effective advocate is understanding how to respect your client's agency.

Update 3: Now that I am over halfway done with my internship it is amazing to look back and see all that I have learned. In just over 5 weeks I have grown to have a better understanding of litigation and hone my skills as an advocate

Being able to shadow attorneys and assist them in Housing court has allowed me to learn useful skills for public interest litigation. Currently I have grown from observing lawyers in housing court to helping with motion practice and preparing for oral arguments. Being able to write orders to show cause and motions has helped me better analyze eviction defenses and the law that has developed. While still being able to help clients voice their story and narrative to the judge.

Beyond writing motions I am also given the opportunity to argue my motion in front of the court. Further honing my advocacy skills and helping to assist the client avoid eviction. Additionally, I have also observed tenant organizing and affirmative actions. Helping clients bring bad actor landlords to court and facilitate habitable living repairs. All these experiences have solidified my desire to work in direct legal services and help me grow as a public interest attorney.

Update 4: Looking back at the past 9 weeks it has been amazing to see all the learning experiences I have been presented with. I have been exposed to areas of housing law and litigation that is crucial to my development as a public interest attorney. Importantly, I have developed my confidence in legal writing for litigation practice

For example, I have been entrusted to assist attorneys with their motion practice and caseload. In my 9 weeks I have written multiple motions, two orders to show cause, and one bill of particulars. This writing practice has not only taught me important legal writing skills, it has also built up my confidence. My first motion I was so nervous and felt like I didn't know what I was doing but now I actively seek out writing projects and have a better grasp of the jurisprudence that guides eviction defenses.

Being able to see my writing project to be filed in a court of law and used to potentially help a client get their case dismissed or more time to comply with a settlement stipulation is rewarding. It takes the practice of legal writing out of the classroom and into the context of client work. Potentially helping a tenant stay in their home and avoid a destabilizing event such as eviction.



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Update 5: After ten rewarding weeks, I sadly said goodbye to my time at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A's Preserving Affordable Housing Division. For ten weeks I was able to learn from some of the most dedicated public interest attorneys. Their passion and dedication to their clients afforded them victories in court that saved their clients from homelessness and unsafe living conditions. Along the way I developed important legal skills that will set me up for a successful future in public interest law.

One of the most important skills I developed is how to deal with different personalities both with clients and opposing counsel. Being able to work with opposing counsel whether it was on motion practice or settlement, taught me patience and how to make an adversarial situation as smooth as possible. On the client facing side I was able to learn how to help the client feel heard while also setting up every interaction with the intent of a productive fact-finding mission.

I also gained valuable legal writing experience beyond just legal research. I was able to take on real client work, examining their case and finding defenses. Learning how to translate these defenses into a motion to dismiss and actually seeing it submitted to the court. This allowed me to explore different facets of legal writing and develop my own writing style. The most important lesson being how to succinctly argue our motion with strong case law. While listing a variety of cases that support your point can seem more impressive, a well thought out argument will be able to make this point in paragraph or less. By the end of my time, I was able to confidently see defenses and possible motions, then draft a comprehensive writing product that was ready to be argued.

Beyond the skills I learned, it was important to be in a high stress court environment and see the day to day of a legal aid attorney. Exposing to me my own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to juggling multiple clients and interests in a single day. And showing me examples of how a successful legal aid attorney stays organized and passionate, while not burning out. Above all this experience solidified my desire to pursue a public interest career in civil legal aid. I am forever grateful for the experience and skills I have taken away from my time at Brooklyn Legal Services Corporation A.