



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

NAME	Rachel Biggio
LAW SCHOOL	University of Pennsylvania Carey Law
ORGANIZATION	Community Legal Services

Update 1:

After a fruitful first year of law school at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School, I am thrilled to share that I am spending this summer as a legal intern in the Health & Independence Unit at Community Legal Services here in Philadelphia. I am also immensely grateful to receive funding from Equal Justice America, an organization devoted to supporting lawyers and law students committed to providing civil legal aid. As an EJA Fellow, I will share regular updates about my summer work.

In my first three weeks at CLS, I have had the chance to learn more about the administration of public benefits in Philadelphia, engage with clients, and meet inspiring and thoughtful legal professionals committed to high quality civil legal aid services. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to volunteer at CLS's Free Utility Clinic, where I helped clients navigate conversations with local utility companies and learn about programs that can help provide assistance with bill payment. I am so grateful to EJA and CLS for giving me the chance to do this exciting and fulfilling work!

Update 2:

It's time for my second Equal Justice America update of the summer! This week marks the halfway mark of my summer internship with Community Legal Services's Health & Independence Unit. I am continuing to learn about the administration of public benefits in the Philadelphia area from excellent legal professionals. Over the past few weeks, I have had the chance to directly advocate for clients, partake in H&I's intake process, and collaborate with clients at various stages of their cases. A highlight has been CLS's annual North Philly Bus Tour, where we had the chance to learn about the incredible work of local organizations like Project HOME, Share Food Program, Las Parcelas Community Garden, Open Kitchen Sculpture Garden, and the Chinatown Clinic at the Church of the Holy Redeemer. The tour was a celebration of the diverse Philadelphia community and spotlighted the overlapping work of various organizations to meet the needs of this city's residents. Pictured



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below are some shots from Share Food's Nice Roots Garden and a friend from Las Parcelas Community Garden!

Update 3:

Time for my 3rd EJA Fellow update! I am continuing to relish my time working at Community Legal Services's Health & Independence Unit. I feel fortunate to work directly with clients and advocate on their behalf across a range of public benefit issues. Another fantastic perk of working at CLS is the opportunity to get exposure to all of CLS's practice areas and the diverse advocacy this organization does to dismantle poverty in the Philadelphia area. Through a series of Law Student Conversations, I have had the chance to learn about CLS's Medical-Legal Partnerships, which seek to address the social determinants of health across various city health centers, including the Rising Sun Health Center, which serves a diverse immigrant population, and CHOP Karabots Pediatric Care Center, which treats more than 35,000 children each year. I have also gained insight into the Energy Unit's efforts to address the impact of climate change and heat migration on CLS's clients; the Homeownership and Consumer Rights Unit's work to preserve generational equity by contending with tangled titles and facilitating estate planning; as well as the exciting work being done by the Language Access Project to achieve language justice for people who encounter obstacles to critical services because English is not their primary language. Getting to be part of an organization doing such critical work across a broad array of subject matters has been thrilling and formative, and I appreciate Equal Justice America's role in making this summer experience possible!

Update 4: This is my second to last week in CLS's Health and Independence Unit. Throughout this summer, I've learned so much about the various benefits programs available to low-income people in Philadelphia. I have specifically gained importance knowledge in a topic of particular interest to me: public healthcare programs like Medicaid and Medicare. The legal frameworks surrounding these programs are extremely complicated, and at CLS, I have both received formal training on these topics and helped clients on the ground navigate these programs. For example, I have assisted clients navigating the complications of being dually eligible for Medicare and Medicaid, wherein Medicaid eligibility helps defray some of the costs of Medicare. The public healthcare landscape is also particularly complicated for immigrants, who often times are ineligible for public benefits for at least 5 years after they became legal permanent residents. I have worked directly with some clients in their efforts to access the more limited programs available to them, such as emergency medical assistance, which provides medical assistance to people experiencing medical emergencies. Another area where I've gotten to do advocacy this summer is home and community-based services. Most states also have waiver programs where participants who might otherwise end up nursing homes are eligible to receive services in their homes. These programs are accompanied by their own legal frameworks, and I have had the chance to contend with these frameworks while advocating for clients facing reductions of these services. Thanks again to Equal Justice America and Community Legal Services for the incredible opportunities I've had this summer!



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Update 5:

As I prepare to start my second year of law school at University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School next week, it's time for my fifth and final hashtag#EJAFellowUpdate. I completed my internship at the Health & Independence Unit at Community Legal Services at the beginning of the August. Throughout the summer, I gained incredible experience working directly with over a dozen low-income clients facing adverse benefit determinations. I met some clients during H&I's in-person intake process and followed their cases over the course of my internship, helping them restore terminated benefits like Medical Assistance and food stamps. I also advocated for disabled clients facing reductions in their personal assistance services through written and expert reports. Toward the end of the summer, I had the chance to observe an assessment for these services so I could learn more about the mechanics about eligibility and service determinations for home and community-based services. Moreover, throughout the summer, CLS and other Philadelphia public interest organizations hosted programming for interns, such as a bus tour of North Philadelphia, a law student lecture series showcasing the work of CLS's various practice groups, and home dinners hosted and prepared by managing attorneys in various CLS units in different Philadelphia neighborhoods. I also got to learn more about the work of other units at CLS through practical experiences like a utility clinic with the Energy Unit. I learned so much from my experience at CLS, including the legal mechanics of the public benefit system in Pennsylvania and the practical reality of working directly with clients, including those with limited English proficiency and disabilities. As I progress in my future career in legal public interest, I will take these practical lessons and more with me – including CLS's client-oriented ethic to deconstructing economic injustice. I could not have done this work with the support of Equal Justice America, whose commitment to supporting civil legal attorneys makes an impact in the lives of both clients and the law students advocating for them.