



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

SUMMER 2024

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1:

A day in the life of a summer legal intern at Kids in Need of Defense (Baltimore)!

8:30 a.m. -- take the free Circulator bus into the office, located just a few blocks from the Inner Harbor. Check that my desk reservation on Robin, the app the office uses, has gone through. No one has a permanent desk because we're only required to come in once a week. So we just reserve whichever desk we want before we come in. People don't seem to be too possessive of desks; I'm trying out different ones every week!

9 a.m. -- arrive at the office. Usually I'm the first, or one of the first, people there. Staff are technically only required to be in office 10 a.m.-3 p.m. during their in-office day, although most trickle in between 9:30 and 10 a.m. and they often stay until 5 p.m. Some are coming from quite far away -- I know a paralegal with a 1.5 hr. commute from DC!

9-10 a.m. -- check email and Teams for anything important. Sometimes paralegals email out intake summaries they will be presenting before our weekly team meeting. Or my supervisor might be checking in. Go over my to-do list -- usually I have a couple projects in the queue.

10 a.m. -- weekly team meeting. We do a grounding exercise and go through intake reports and assign the cases to either a KIND or pro bono attorney. Every other week we have a workshop, where someone presents about a relevant topic. I am helping my supervisor prepare a presentation on the Federal Rules of Evidence.

11 a.m. -- quick break, or maybe an overflow intakes meeting!



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11:30 a.m.-12 p.m. -- in-person check-in with my supervisor. We've scheduled this meeting on Tuesdays, when we're both in the office, so I go to her desk, and we go over what I've been working on. I just finished a draft argument about the stop-time rule for one client's cancellation of removal petition, so we're reviewing that today.

12-1 p.m. -- review what I have to do for the rest of the day; maybe make edits according to my supervisor's feedback or do a bit of quick research for my next project.

1-2 p.m. -- lunch, usually with the other intern, where we share what projects we're working on. Sometimes I'll ask other staff if I can grab lunch with them, too!

2-5 p.m. -- my most productive time, since I have no meetings. Working on my next project, researching SIJ-related Maryland statutes for a quick-reference guide.

Update 2:

A third of the way through an internship at Kids in Need of Defense (KIND)!

I want to briefly write about wellness. Immigration defense can be difficult work, especially when it comes to working with young people as a nonprofit attorney (or paralegal/staff member). KIND clearly cares about maintaining the long-term wellness of its employees, so they can continue to do valuable work with KIND's clientele.

A few of the wellness opportunities KIND provides:

- Quarterly wellness webinars
- KIND Baltimore has a Wellness Committee, which organizes thrice yearly wellness activities. During the second week of my internship, we had a wellness hike and then went to a local brewery for lunch! This was a great way to encourage team bonding as well. Everyone from the office was invited, which allowed us to spend time with people we don't normally work with.
- Wellness Fridays. KIND closes for one Friday each month, allowing employees to spend that time on their personal wellness. During the June wellness day, I was able to sleep in a bit and visit a local museum, getting to know the Baltimore community a bit better!

I appreciate working for an organization that clearly values the long-term sustainability of its employees' work. Especially when it comes to public interest, and immigration and children in particular, it's essential to have a supportive management that values employee wellness.

Update 3:

Going to court as a KIND intern



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One of the most exciting parts of my summer at KIND thus far has been the opportunity to attend hearings with attorneys and clients. KIND's work is somewhat unique in that attorneys end up in both state and immigration courts. This is because one of our main forms of relief for our clients is SIJS, or special immigrant juvenile status, which requires a finding in state court before the client can apply to USCIS for relief.

I've been fortunate to attend two hearings for SIJS cases this summer, with two separate attorneys, including one this week in Annapolis, Maryland's capital. Usually, at these hearings, our client's sponsor (a parent, relative, or whoever else is caring for them) is petitioning for custody or guardianship based on the fact that the client was inadequately cared for by one or both of their parents. It's always interesting to hear the facts of these cases, as our clients come from many different countries and circumstances.

I've also found it interesting to see how much the client knows about their own case. Since we work with children, sometimes the client is actually quite ignorant of what we're telling the court. For example, at my most recent court hearing, the clients were two young girls, one of whom didn't even remember her life back in her home country because she had left at such a young age. In this case, it can be difficult for the children to hear the testimony of their sponsor, which will often help outline what abuse/neglect/abandonment occurred that is justifying transfer of custody/guardianship. So, sometimes the KIND attorney (or the judge!) will ask the judge to allow the children to wait in the hallway during the testimony of their sponsor. This helps ensure adequate factual testimony while protecting the children.

At the hearing this week, I took the two girls out into the hallway to wait during testimony with the sponsor. And here began a learning experience for me--how do you describe how to fold a paper crane in Spanish? I've truly learned many things this summer.

Update 4:

Major projects at my 1L summer internship

I've been fortunate to have the opportunity to work on a variety of projects this summer. Some include clients, some include researching case law, some include making presentations to my colleagues. I've had a very diverse roster of assignments--perfect for someone who worries about getting bored! Some of my favorite research and writing projects have included:

1. Co-presenting with my supervisor during a weekly attorney meeting about the Federal Rules of Evidence and how they come into play in immigration court
2. Writing two memos analyzing deficient NTAs before court hearings.



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3. Researching particular social group formulation for asylum cases and writing a portion of an application presenting a PSG.
4. Researching cancelation of removal and how a recent Supreme Court case (*Niz-Chavez v. Garland*) has influenced the ability of a client to apply for that form of relief.

All these projects have refined my research and writing skills--the area I was most intimidated about when beginning this internship. I have been very fortunate to work on all these topics and am excited to finish up my projects as the summer winds down.

Update 5:

Reflecting on a summer at KIND

I recently spoke to a friend I hadn't chatted with since mid-May, before my internship at KIND Baltimore began. She asked how my internship was, with a little trepidation, and seemed surprised when I answered along the lines of an enthusiastic, "Great!" This gave me pause, and then I remembered—just a few weeks before beginning my internship at KIND, I had been quite nervous about the whole affair!

In the way of nonprofits, KIND had interviewed me in late winter, offered me the job, and then ... radio silence since. When I last spoke to my friend, I had been worried about not having heard from the office about basic logistics like the office address, dress code, computer policy, and a first day schedule. I was concerned that, because employees only needed to work from the office one day a week, I might not get to know any of them very well.

These concerns were perfectly legitimate, and indeed in my exit interview with KIND one of my constructive criticisms was a gentle plea to communicate earlier for the sake of us Type A people who need to plan a bit farther in advance! But over the course of the summer, all my concerns had been allayed. As I told many of my colleagues in my departing week, KIND has set the bar very high for future workplaces.

The office is a warm, collaborative space—truly impressive despite the fact that many of the employees don't see each other in person but once or twice a month! Weekly meetings greatly helped build a sense of community. The work is reasonable—full caseloads, but not so full that attorneys and paralegals are overwhelmed. Wellness days and other events also help protect wellbeing. The social services team also provides extra social support for clients, alleviating the burden on legal staff. It's a model that works well, both for clients and for employees. I can see how KIND inspires loyalty like that of my law school friend who first inspired me to apply to intern there! That friend worked as a paralegal in the New York office before law school and intends to return after graduation. And this is not unusual for KIND—in my office alone there were two attorneys who had done the same thing, and one who was currently doing an evening law degree!



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I'm truly thankful for the experience to learn about direct client representation and the immigration system this summer. I am excited to keep in touch with my office colleagues and follow KIND's work in the future!