



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2025

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Lauren Winkleback
LAW SCHOOL	Cardozo
ORGANIZATION	The Legal Aid Society

Final Reflection:

The last weeks of my internship have consisted of wrapping up preparations for a fair hearing with the NYC Human Resources Administration for a client whose cash assistance was recouped for allegedly concealing child support payments. We vigorously prepared direct examination, cross examination, and opening and closing arguments and went through all of the questions with the client. However, HRA did not appear and we moved to exclude their evidence packet and thus are anticipating the client will “win” by default. It was frustrating because it seemed the agency simply did not find it worthwhile to appear for the matter, but for the client, she was incredibly stressed about losing \$12,000 and had to reflect on the traumatic relationship she had with her child’s father and the process of their family court case and his non-compliance with the court order. But it was also a reminder that the goals of attorneys and clients may differ, but ultimately the role of the attorney is to achieve the client’s objective using skills and knowledge they have regarding the strategy and process of a case. Ultimately, the most important thing is the client retaining all of her cash assistance. But it’s frustrating to deal with the agency and to prepare so diligently only to not really have to present an argument simply because the agency did not appear. However, the process of preparing for the hearing was tremendously valuable. It was my first experience working so closely with a client on my own and figuring out how to ask questions with delicacy and sensitivity and being flexible with where they guide the conversation, while trying to ensure the meeting is productive. I think client interaction was the most important learning experience of my internship. It is easy to get caught up in the stress and chaos of court, dealing with landlord’s attorneys, and balancing writing multiple motions for different clients—often on tight time frames. But I learned to listen to clients with empathy and giving them space to share grievances and their experience, because a significant part of being a



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

public interest attorney is being part of a support system and ensuring clients know there is someone fighting zealously for them and their interests.