



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2025

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

NAME	Cameron McCulloch
LAW SCHOOL	University of Chicago Law School
ORGANIZATION	Police Accountability Project at the Edwin F. Mandel Legal Aid Clinic

Final Reflection:

This summer, I had the privilege of working in the Civil Rights and Police Accountability Clinic at the University of Chicago Law School's Mandel Legal Aid Clinic. Over the course of eight weeks, I was immersed in litigation, policy research, and client advocacy at the intersection of constitutional rights and systemic reform. The experience deepened my commitment to civil rights work while showing me how much of the struggle for justice takes place in the contested space between law, policy, and practice.

One of my primary projects involved supporting a civil contempt action against the City of Chicago for violating a federal consent decree. The decree was meant to guarantee arrestees timely access to phones and legal counsel, yet systemic noncompliance persisted. I researched evidentiary standards and enforcement mechanisms, drafted memoranda, and helped prepare for hearings. In my final weeks, our team successfully secured a series of court hearings—a small but meaningful step toward accountability. This work reminded me that even hard-fought legislative or judicial victories must be vigilantly enforced to become real in people's lives.

In parallel, I contributed to a collaborative policy project with physicians at the University of Chicago Medical Center's South Side Trauma Unit. We interviewed patients and providers about police presence in hospitals, coding transcripts that revealed troubling patterns: questioning, surveillance, and even physical restraint of patients receiving medical care. Many were not in custody, yet their rights and dignity were undermined in vulnerable moments. Our goal is to develop one of the first national model policies to guide trauma-informed policing in clinical settings. The project underscored how law must often be paired with professional and institutional reforms to protect the people most affected.



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Beyond these core efforts, I also had the chance to engage in broader systemic work. I contributed to an amicus brief defending public access to police disciplinary hearings against union efforts to close them off, helping preserve transparency in a system that too often operates in the shadows. I also worked on a motion to intervene in a police shooting case, challenging the sealing of key records in line with public accountability norms shaped in the wake of Laquan McDonald. These opportunities brought home how litigation can be both a tool for individual redress and a lever for broader structural reform.

This summer's work was as demanding as it was rewarding. I leave with sharper legal skills, a deeper sense of the strategies and politics of systemic change, and immense gratitude for my colleagues, our clients, and Craig Futterman's mentorship. The clinic taught me not only the letter of the law, but also how to navigate the policies, personalities, and institutional dynamics that make change possible.

I am excited to continue this work in the fall as a returning student in the clinic, while also taking courses on the law, policy, and politics of policing and on criminal procedure. Looking ahead, I plan to pursue trial advocacy training and obtain my 711 license so I can represent clients directly in court during my 3L year. Thanks to the support of Equal Justice America, this summer has been a transformative step in my journey toward a career in civil rights advocacy.