



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: On June 1st I began my internship at Lawyers for Children. Much of my first week consisted of introductory trainings and meeting my supervisor. This summer I'm interning with LFC's Domestic Violence Project, specifically working with an attorney who represents children in the Integrated Domestic Violence (IDV) Part of Manhattan Supreme Court. Cases may be removed to the IDV Court by the IDV judge, where cases involve a criminal matter and either a matrimonial or family law matter. The integration of various proceedings families may be facing supports families greatly by reducing administrative and procedural burdens. I observed a few cases in Manhattan Family Court, including permanency hearings and juvenile delinquency hearings. Friday was my first appearance in the IDV court, notetaking oral arguments on the defendant's emergency order to show cause. This was a very interesting introduction to a case approaching trial, where the defendant filed an emergency order to expand visitation and begin unsupervised visits. Our client is opposed to additional time with the defendant mother, and my supervisor emphasized to the court the inaccurate claims that were included in the emergency order. He asked for my help with his arguments prior to trial, as I had read the order and we discussed the background of the case. It was insightful to review his arguments before the proceeding, and I appreciated the opportunity to review and suggest another argument that he made to the Judge.

Update 2: As I've settled into my role at Lawyers for Children, I've been able to attend multiple court hearings in Manhattan Family Court and the Integrated Domestic Violence Part of the Supreme court. These appearances have led to legal research assignments in order to help attorneys prepare for their positions, arguments, and responses to opposing parties' arguments. I have also taken notes on many proceedings for my supervisor to review and to update our social workers on the case. Observing the criminal cases in the IDV part has been very



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fascinating for me, as I have not spent much time in criminal court and believe this has broadened my understanding of criminal hearings in New York.

With my legal research I've been able to help attorneys prior to appearances or client calls develop their arguments and propose new ideas based on what I've read in case files and what I've researched. LFC also has a robust training program and this week we heard from various projects such as the Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, Public Policy & Impact Litigation, and the Mental Health and Developmental Disability Advocacy. These trainings have shed light on various areas of child advocacy that LFC engages in and were a great way to provide supplemental training and knowledge on various issues that young people face.

Update 3: At LFC I have now sat in on and participated in two client interviews which has been very exciting, as it feels like attorneys' place a lot of trust in you when they permit you to interview young children! I am looking forward to joining more interviews and navigating how client interviews work depending on the age of the child, and how best to communicate and obtain their position.

As I continue to conduct legal research and work on my memo, I also have worked on interim assignments like taking notes and on hearings and reviewing ACS reports to help attorneys develop arguments. This past week, there was a continued trial where I helped an attorney come up with cross examination questions. It was really [cool] to watch an attorney sue questions I had come up with on the record! LFC's training programs have continued as well, so I have gotten to learn about projects including SIJS cases, advocating for LGBTQIA+ youth, juvenile delinquency proceedings, and education advocacy. My supervisor and I are figuring out when I will be able to go on the record in IDV this summer, and I am excited about the prospect of going on record during a trial in a few weeks!

Update 4: This past week I worked on my first trial in the IDV part. Prior to the trial I got to sit in on settlement conversation with the Judge, which was interesting to observe prior to a case that went forward in trial. I helped my supervisor by creating outlines for crossing witnesses and coming up questions on cross for the family offense portion of the trial. After studying the case file, it was good practice for me to consider what I should be asking about the alleged incidences that highlight our client's position, and what questions demonstrate potential harm to the child in the situation described.

As I continue my work in the IDV court, I have also taken the time to observe cases in other practice areas. I attended a disposition on a Juvenile Delinquency case, and this week will be observing the Human Trafficking part in Family Court. The Youth Advocates Project also organized a visit for the interns to go to The Door, a youth social services organization that many of LFC's clients belong to, and who also refer many young people to LFC. Many of their serves are communal, youth oriented, and social services focused, but working at LFC has



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expanded my horizons in thinking about what services are available to benefit young people in NYC.

Final Reflection: It was an incredibly eventful and bittersweet end to my internship at Lawyers for Children last week! The past two weeks I spent wrapping up a legal memo and preparing for a trial in IDV. It was rewarding to revisit custody research that I learned in family law, especially with the opportunity to apply it to a case that will have a significant impact on a child. I also attended the wraparound part of court, which is a new initiative in a part of New York County Family Court that is focused on directed services and problem solving for youth who have been sexually exploited or are at risk for sexual exploitation. This part was fascinating and has inspired me to learn more about advocacy and support roles for children who are survivors of sex trafficking. It was also interesting to see a court focus on preventative measures for children at risk of trafficking. My last week proved incredibly busy, as I appeared on the record in the IDV Part of Supreme Court twice. First, I did a portion of the cross examination of the father of our clients in a trial over custody, visitation, and an order of protection. I was very honored that my supervisor entrusted me with this task and sought my input in preparing the questions and coordinating the direction of topics. The next day, I got to go on the record to state the position of a client who I had interviewed. The hearing was on for the AFC's position as to visitation with the child, so it was very rewarding to convey our client's position to the court so the Judge could make her decision.

Working at LFC in the IDV court has been a fruitful educational and vocational experience. It was fascinating to learn more about how this part of Supreme Court works and to see the services it provides for families. Further, being at LFC taught me many things about the legal advocacy efforts possible for children in Family Court and broadened my understanding of what attorneys can do to support children in need. My supervisor was also incredibly encouraging and supportive, making sure my appearance made it onto the record and included me in case discussions, trial strategy, and sought my input which was very gratifying. LFC has been an organization I've been interested in since beginning my legal career, as someone passionate about child advocacy and supporting families through the courts.