



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1:

I've only been part of the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York for a short time now, but already I'm working on projects that I believe will have far-reaching and long-term results. One project I'm working on, for example, involves researching statutes and drafting templates to create a pro se appeal packet for central NY tenants who want to appeal evictions to higher courts from villages, towns, and cities. Unfortunately, LASMNY sometimes cannot take on appeals for full representation and can only assist in getting the appeal process started. However, this packet would be a valuable resource that provides tenants with a how-to guide on the whole process of the appeal.

I think projects like this highlight the importance of legal aid. Sometimes even organizations that exist to provide counsel to those who can't afford it are restricted in what cases they can take. For this reason, it is absolutely vital that we provide resources to the community so even if we can't take a certain case, that person can still access materials that help them solve whatever problem they may be facing.

Update 2:

I've had the opportunity to work on a number of cases so far, from divorces to eviction appeals, which was very exciting. I have also recently been assigned a number of cases, including a bankruptcy case and a pressing eviction diversion case. I will also be working alongside my fellow internship teams to ensure that our organization's helpline letters are up to date. Additionally, I plan to head out to local mobile home parks in the future to conduct a survey on rent-to-own leases.

Next week, we will be learning about disability advocacy and potentially be receiving related cases! We also have a will and estates clinic coming up. In preparation for this clinic, we will be conducting client intake calls, where we run through a questionnaire with clients to collect their information.



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I've enjoyed my work so far and look forward to what else my internship has in store for me. My work is not only substantive and challenging, often requiring me to scour legal databases for rarely addressed scenarios due to how infrequently those scenarios arise, but also incredibly impactful. We have a backlog of almost two years of cases, but little by little, we have been working our way through them to get everything up to date!

Update 3:

So far, I've done a few divorce cases, some estates cases, took on a bankruptcy case, and even a few emergency eviction cases. The emergency eviction cases were particularly difficult due to the terms of the leases and notices to cure and what opposing counsel was arguing for each of these, but my fellow interns and I managed to create some proper arguments for each of the cases we've been working on. All in all, it's great to get some exposure to these types of legal cases.

Last week, I also took a trip to a local mobile home park to take a quick survey on rent-to-own agreements. My supervising attorney is working on a case where an RTO agreement went sour because of an arbitrary unpaid bill, which ultimately led to the tenants being denied ownership. The attorney wanted to know if this is a widespread or isolated issue. Unfortunately, it seems the attorney's client may not be the only one facing troubles with RTO agreements or facing other common issues with their landlord, which leads me to wonder how many communities face these issues. I don't think I would have thought to explore these types of topics had I not been doing the work I'm doing this summer.

Update 4:

I've completed a number of projects so far, ranging from legal research on the confusing process for perfecting eviction appeals to county court, to drafting briefs for issue preservation and the best evidence rule, to even writing up wills and documents granting power of attorney. Being able to gain this exposure when I'm still just a student has been invaluable to me, because it has helped me narrow down the practice areas I would like to explore after graduation.

But more importantly, I'm doing good for the community. Every time I begin researching for a brief or memo, I remind myself that this research is to help someone in need of legal aid. When I encounter obstacles such as a dearth of case law on a particular subject, I remind myself again what my purpose is here and keep pushing onward. So far, I have yet to find an issue where I couldn't find some useful information with just a little bit more searching.

This is my second to last week at LASMNY. It truly amazes me how fast time has flown by, but I look back on all that I've done and think about all that I've learned so far, and I realize how thankful I am to have this opportunity.

Final Reflection:

Time has certainly flown. Earlier this month I completed my internship with the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York. This internship was absolutely thrilling! I'm thankful to have had the opportunity to work on projects that truly matter, projects that directly affect people's lives.



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From helping indigent clients obtain divorces, to calculating repayment plans in bankruptcy proceedings, to drafting indigent clients' wills and estates, to drafting arguments to defend clients facing eviction, I've worked on a lot of meaningful projects this summer.

It has been a privilege working with LASMNY. As I noted in an earlier update, this program showed me how truly scarce legal services are for lower-income families and individuals. There is an astounding number of people who need legal aid but cannot afford it. But I feel that I at least had a little impact in that number of people this summer. It felt good knowing that I was helping someone who was facing a major obstacle in their life.

Even when I wasn't directly drafting documents or researching case law and statutes for a specific case, I also helped research statutes to create pro se instruction packets for appealing eviction cases from towns, cities, and villages to county courts. The problem was that appeals like these are so rare that the appeal procedure has yet to be fully clarified. Most counties usually relied on the procedures laid out in NY statutes, but some counties also had their own filing and perfecting processes. After finding commentary from a county judge, however, I knew this was the key to helping pin down exactly which procedures to apply to each county. My team eventually created a packet tailored to each county LASMNY serves, complete with the forms the prospective appellant needs to fill out.

I'm not only thankful to have been part of LASMNY this summer, but also EJA. It was a privilege meeting my EJA colleagues in New York City earlier this year. To see so many people with a common goal toward creating meaningful contributions in their legal career gave me the kind of joy you can't really find anywhere else. On top of that, it has been such a pleasure speaking with my mentor! She has been incredibly helpful in offering advice and strategies for managing stress, especially when dealing with cases that involve high stakes for my clients. She has also got me in touch with lawyers who specialize in some of my personal interests, for which I am very thankful.

Overall, I am very glad to have been part of LASMNY and EJA this summer. I plan to keep in touch with everyone I've worked alongside and for, as well as LASMNY and EJA as a whole.