



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: My first week at the Urban Resource Institute was quite insightful. I received comprehensive training on immigration remedies for survivors of intimate partner violence, including VAWA self-petitions, U visas, and T visas, as well as training on the dynamics of domestic violence and trauma-informed client relations. These sessions emphasized the importance of meeting clients where they are and understanding how systemic barriers including language access, housing instability, and fear of law enforcement, compound their legal needs.

Beyond the training, I had the opportunity to sit in on client interviews conducted by experienced attorneys and legal advocates. Observing these conversations gave me a front-row view of how legal knowledge must be translated into compassionate, clear guidance. Most meaningfully, I was given the opportunity to lead portions of client conversations. Under supervision, I practiced asking intake questions, explaining basic legal processes, and documenting client narratives with care and accuracy. While I felt the weight of this responsibility, I also gained confidence in my ability to connect with survivors and identify their most urgent legal concerns.

Update 2: The past two weeks have been more informative. We have done training on sensitivity in client interviewing, the family court system, and asylum processes. These trainings have allowed us to support clients as we start, continue or finish their VAWA and U Visa petitions. Many clients have many intersecting interactions with many systems and institutions, so helping them navigate the systems with understanding is paramount.

Update 3: The past two weeks have been incredibly informative. I spent some time with the office of Government Affairs, and I got to conduct legislative research on pet-inclusive transitional housing.



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Update 4: The past two weeks, I had a rotation at the office of Government Affairs at the Urban Resource Institute. I conducted legislative research on affordable housing preferences and set asides in different cities in the US. I also researched and drafted memos on the legislative landscape for pet-inclusive transitional housing and homeless/domestic violence shelters in the US.

Final Reflection: This summer at the Urban Resource Institute's Legal Education Advocacy Program (LEAP) has been transformative. I gained a better understanding of domestic violence and how to support victims of domestic violence while interacting with them with dignity. My rotations across immigration law, government affairs, and the general counsel's office gave me a broader understanding of how direct legal services, policy advocacy, and organizational infrastructure work in concert to support vulnerable communities.

From my first week, I was immersed in the realities of this work. We began first with training sessions on VAWA self-petitions, U visas, and trauma-informed client relations which set the tone for the work we needed to do and how to support clients. I sat in on intake interviews and was soon given the opportunity to lead portions of those conversations. I remember one client in particular who I accompanied to a family court hearing to support her. Her abuser was present and had physically attempted to intimidate her. I was able to be a buffer for her at that moment. Additionally, her abuser had called the police on her and had taken out a criminal restraining order against her, so she was at risk of losing her housing and custody of her child. I realized how interconnected her legal needs were from criminal to family and to housing. That moment stayed with me. I saw in real time the weight of client service and how the legal system and institutions like URI provide hope.

I often struggled at times with the weight of what clients shared. The first few weeks were difficult because I had not experienced working with clients before. I also grappled with the limits of my own knowledge. However, my supervising attorneys were very supportive. They guided me through the discomfort and helped me learn how to be more confident and how to find answers to questions I had.

Professionally, this experience sharpened my legal research and writing skills while introducing me to the practical realities of nonprofit legal work. I drafted compliance standards for child safeguarding policies, tracked legislation on pet-inclusive housing, and contributed to immigration filings under the mentorship of highly proficient attorneys.

Personally, I have grown more patient, more resilient, and more certain of my path. This summer confirmed my commitment to public interest law. I may not be able to help all victims of domestic violence, but I am grateful to the LEAP team, to my clients, and to Equal Justice America for making the possibility of working with and helping some victims.