



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: This summer, I am interning with the Law Center for Better Housing (LCBH), where I help provide eviction defense services to low-income individuals and families throughout the Chicagoland area. I am honored to have been selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow. I am deeply grateful to EJA for their support of law students committed to expanding access to civil legal aid and advancing justice for underserved communities.

As an EJA Fellow, I will be sharing updates throughout the summer to highlight the vital work LCBH does on behalf of individuals and families experiencing housing insecurity in Chicago.

I am excited to continue working with tenants facing eviction and to help ensure they have meaningful advocacy in legal proceedings that are often difficult to navigate and can disproportionately favor landlords with greater resources and legal representation.

As an intern, I have the opportunity to work directly with clients experiencing housing instability and facing the risk of homelessness. LCBH's mission is to bridge the justice gap in eviction courts by providing tenants with legal representation and ensuring their voices are heard in fast-paced proceedings where their rights may otherwise be overlooked.

During my first two weeks, I have had the privilege of observing intake calls conducted by LCBH's dedicated paralegals, gaining valuable insight into the barriers tenants face in accessing the court system and negotiating with landlords and their attorneys. I have also assisted in drafting motions that raise defenses and counterclaims, helping to protect tenants' rights and hold landlords accountable under the law.

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important work and look



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forward to continuing to advocate for individuals and families seeking safe and stable housing.

Update 2: For the past two weeks, I have drafted various motions to seal eviction records for tenants whose prior eviction cases were preventing them from securing housing, leaving many individuals homeless despite maintaining stable employment. After speaking with clients about the circumstances that led to their evictions, it became clear that these cases often resulted from multiple compounding factors beyond their control, like pregnancy, job loss, medical issues, or other unexpected financial hardships.

Unfortunately, a single period of financial hardship can continue to define a tenant long after the underlying issue has been resolved, as landlords frequently deny housing applications based on past eviction records.

LCBH's work in sealing eviction records is essential because it helps ensure that a temporary period of financial instability does not permanently limit a person's housing opportunities. By removing these barriers, tenants are better able to secure stable housing after overcoming financial setbacks. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn firsthand about the importance of eviction sealing and to contribute to efforts that help housing-insecure individuals move forward without being defined by past evictions.

Update 3: For the past two weeks I have continued to write motions to seal client's eviction records and prepare for the hearings where I will present the motions in front of a judge. I have also continued to conduct intake interview of potential clients, where I listen to their stories and compile all the relevant facts necessary for the attorneys to decide on the scope of representation LCBH can provide.

Speaking with tenants during intake interviews has shed light on the compounding factors that can lead to tenants falling behind on rent. The most common story I have heard over the past month is tenants experiencing severe health issues that impede their ability to work, needing to spend their money on doctor visits instead of their rent, and ultimately fall incredibly behind on rent. Tenants being forced into the decision between taking care of their health or paying rent is a decision that should not be forced upon them. Unfortunately, it is and it comes with consequences of dealing with the eviction process. The work that LCBH does to advise these tenants and provide representation in court proceedings providing clarity and guidance in foreign proceedings after going through troubling times outside of the eviction process.

Update 4: Over the past two weeks, I had the opportunity to argue motions to seal that I drafted. In one case, despite our client experiencing significant housing insecurity because of her open eviction record, the court denied our motion. Our client had fallen behind on payments



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while struggling financially and prioritizing the care of her children over paying the outstanding balance owed to her former landlords. While it is understood that landlords have an interest in receiving the back rent they are owed, the community also has an interest in uplifting our neighbors and not letting a one time in their lives define their ability to access housing. Even after hearing about the hardships she faced and the barriers her eviction record created in securing stable housing, the court concluded that sealing her record would not be in the public interest.

This experience left me reflecting on what "the public interest" means in eviction court. How should courts balance a landlord's interest in collecting unpaid rent and making informed leasing decisions with a tenant's interest in rebuilding after a period of financial hardship? At what point, should a past eviction no longer define a person's access to housing? How should courts balance a landlord's interest in collecting past-due rent against a family's interest in obtaining safe and stable housing?

As my time at Law Center for Better Housing comes to an end, these are the questions I continue to think about. Is the public interest best served by allowing a moment of financial hardship to follow a single mother indefinitely, limiting her ability to find housing for herself and her children? Or is it better served by recognizing that housing stability and second chances ultimately strengthen our communities? My time this summer has reinforced that access to justice is about more than legal representation— but also thoughtful consideration of how the law affects the lives of the people it serves.

Final Reflection: This summer at the Law Center for Better Housing provided me with an invaluable experience that shed light on the importance of eviction defense and legal aid work. I conducted numerous intake interviews with tenants who had fallen behind on rent and faced eviction, as well as tenants experiencing severe housing conditions. Nearly every tenant I spoke with faced significant challenges beyond the issues with their housing, including unemployment and health issues, which were often intertwined with poverty. These circumstances frequently left tenants without the resources or access to advocacy necessary to maintain or improve their housing.

Through my own intake interviews and by observing LCBH attorneys provide tenants with full representation and legal advice, I saw firsthand how LCBH helps bridge the justice gap and ensures that tenants have meaningful access to the legal resources necessary to protect their rights.

I was also fortunate to use my 711 license to argue two motions to seal eviction records for clients whose initial intake interviews I had conducted. These clients had fallen behind on rent



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after losing their jobs or experiencing health issues, forcing them to make difficult decisions about whether to pay rent, afford healthcare, or provide for their families. They were ultimately evicted after being unable to secure legal representation, resulting in substantial money judgments. Following their evictions, their open eviction records created additional barriers to securing new housing and contributed to severe housing insecurity. To address these collateral consequences, I argued motions to seal their eviction records, asking the court to exercise its discretion and give these tenants an opportunity to secure stable housing. Through this experience, I learned that eviction courts do not always fully recognize the importance of giving society's most vulnerable tenants a second chance at stable housing or preventing a period of financial hardship from indefinitely determining a person's access to housing.

I am extremely grateful for the experiences and lessons I gained this summer. I will carry forward the importance of being a trusted person whom clients can confide in and of approaching every case with both zealousness and compassion. I was privileged to observe these qualities in the attorneys at the Law Center for Better Housing throughout the summer, and I hope to carry their example with me throughout my legal career.