



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Celia Rosen
LAW SCHOOL	Fordham Law School
ORGANIZATION	New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG)

Update 1: In late May, I began my internship as a Paul Frimmer Fellow at NYLAG, working in the Advance Planning Practice. I was initially drawn to the position because of its connection to property law, which was my favorite subject during 1L year. My first two weeks have flown by, and I have thoroughly enjoyed every aspect of the experience so far.

During my first week, I worked on both discrete and complex research projects involving two different guardianship matters: a 17A guardianship and an Article 81 guardianship. Before starting the internship, I did not even know the distinction between the two, so it was exciting to begin learning about this area of law. I also gained exposure to will drafting and helped prepare estate planning documents for two families. Because many of NYLAG's clients rely on government benefits, our team is especially careful to ensure that the estate planning process does not jeopardize clients' eligibility for essential public assistance programs.

My second week began with a trip to Surrogate's Court in Queens to assist a client with a guardianship filing. I then began drafting an external appeal for an elderly client seeking increased in-home care coverage after Medicaid denied her request for additional services. The highlight of the week was accompanying my supervisor, Erin, to a clinic at a large New York law firm, where she trained attorneys to prepare Healthcare Proxy and Power of Attorney documents for Holocaust survivors in New York City. As the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor myself, having the opportunity to assist survivors and their families has been one of the most meaningful parts of the fellowship so far.

This week, I also met with my EJA fellowship mentor, Abigail Urquhart. It was valuable to hear about her career path and experiences in the legal profession, as well as to discuss navigating a



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legal career as a woman. I am excited to learn more about her practice area and to hear about her extensive pro bono work throughout the summer.

Overall, these first two weeks have reinforced my interest in client-centered legal work and have given me a greater appreciation for the ways legal services organizations can make a meaningful difference in people's lives. It has been especially meaningful to work with so many older New Yorkers, particularly given the heartbreaking reality that aging and poverty are so often intertwined. Through both estate planning and benefits advocacy, I have seen how vulnerable many elderly individuals can be and how critical access to legal services is in helping them maintain dignity, autonomy, and security. I am looking forward to continuing to learn and contribute throughout the remainder of the fellowship.

Update 2: Over the past several weeks of my fellowship at NYLAG's Advance Planning Practice, I have continued to deepen my understanding of elder law and estate planning while gaining greater appreciation for the many ways legal services organizations support vulnerable New Yorkers. As my responsibilities have expanded, I have had the opportunity to work more directly with clients and to see firsthand how legal advocacy can have a meaningful impact on individuals' daily lives.

Much of my recent work has involved wills and estate planning matters. I have assisted with drafting and reviewing estate planning documents and have learned more about the importance of helping clients create plans that protect both their assets and their long-term goals. Through these cases, I have gained a better understanding of the practical and emotional considerations that often accompany advance planning, particularly for older adults and individuals facing significant health challenges.

One of the most meaningful experiences of the fellowship thus far involved assisting an elderly client who had been experiencing elder abuse and lacked adequate support at home. In addition to helping him begin the process of organizing his legal affairs and preparing important planning documents, I accompanied him on a grocery shopping trip because he did not have anyone available to assist him. This experience reinforced for me that effective legal services often require addressing clients' broader needs and circumstances, not just their legal issues. Spending time with him outside the traditional legal setting highlighted the isolation many older adults face and underscored the importance of treating clients with dignity, patience, and compassion.

This month also provided opportunities to learn more about NYLAG beyond my own practice area. I enjoyed having lunch with members of the broader Public Benefits Unit and hearing about the wide range of work they do to help clients access essential resources and navigate



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complex benefits systems. It was valuable to learn how different practice groups collaborate to provide holistic support to clients whose legal challenges are often interconnected.

Additionally, I attended a meaningful Equal Justice America networking event, where I had the opportunity to connect with other fellows and public interest advocates. One of the highlights of the event was learning about the EJA Disability Rights Clinic at Pace University and hearing about the important work being done to expand access to justice for individuals with disabilities. Listening to practitioners and students discuss their experiences reinforced my interest in public interest law and exposed me to additional avenues for advocacy.

These experiences have continued to strengthen my commitment to client-centered legal work. Whether assisting with estate planning documents, supporting clients facing elder abuse, or learning from attorneys across different practice areas, I have seen how legal services can promote stability, autonomy, and dignity for individuals who might otherwise struggle to access assistance. I am grateful for the opportunity to continue learning from NYLAG's dedicated attorneys and staff, and I look forward to building on these experiences throughout the remainder of the fellowship.

Update 3: During the last week of June, I assisted my team at NYLAG with a pro bono clinic at a law firm in Midtown Manhattan. The clinic was designed to help eligible clients complete their Power of Attorney and Health Care Proxy documents. Both are essential to the work we do, allowing clients to designate trusted individuals to make important decisions on their behalf if they are ever unable to do so themselves. Although I had previously helped my supervising attorney prepare these documents, this was the first time I completed them independently with a client.

I was paired with a kind older couple. The husband had been born in Italy before immigrating to Brazil and eventually settling in New York. His wife, who was a bit younger, was Brazilian. It was immediately clear that they had built a life together over many years of love and devotion. As we worked through his Power of Attorney, our conversation naturally drifted beyond the paperwork. He shared stories about serving in the Italian army, his journey to New York decades before I was born, and how much the city had changed over the years. He also spoke candidly about his worries for the future and how uncertain life feels as he grows older.

I left the clinic feeling grateful to have shared such an intimate conversation with a client. Before this experience, I had viewed Power of Attorney and Health Care Proxy documents as relatively routine legal forms. Instead, I learned that these conversations often become opportunities for clients to reflect on the lives they have built, the people they trust most, and the way they hope to age with dignity. It reminded me that even the most technical areas of legal practice are, at their core, about people and their stories.



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Update 4: In the last few weeks of my fellowship at NYLAG, I accompanied an attorney on a visit to an older client who was living in an elder care home in Queens. We went into the meeting with the understanding that our client had the capacity to execute legal documents, that his current living situation was not ideal for him, and that he had a trusted friend who could serve as his Power of Attorney.

When we arrived, however, we were met with a very different picture. Our client seemed confused, and the home care employees expressed concerns about the friend we had understood to be a trusted person in his life. It quickly became clear that the situation was more complicated than we had initially understood. The attorney I was with called the head of NYLAG's Elder Law Practice, and I listened as they carefully went back and forth about what the appropriate next steps should be. We did not want to leave our client without the support and protections that a Health Care Proxy and Power of Attorney can provide. At the same time, it became increasingly clear that executing these documents could potentially leave our client vulnerable to exploitation or abuse by his friend.

Ultimately, we decided not to move forward with the documents. It was difficult to leave our client and explain why we did not think signing the documents was appropriate, but the experience was an excellent example of what thoughtful lawyering looks like. We did not simply rely on the information we had been given before the meeting. Instead, we paid attention to the circumstances we encountered, listened to the concerns of the people around our client, and allowed those observations to guide us toward a more careful and legally sound decision.

Seeing how thoughtfully and carefully each decision at NYLAG was made about whether and how clients should execute these documents solidified for me the weight that a Power of Attorney and Health Care Proxy can carry. These documents can completely change someone's life, giving them a sense of freedom, security, and relief as they age or lose capacity. But they can also become tools for exploitation and abuse when placed in the wrong hands. That tension made me appreciate just how much responsibility lawyers have when helping clients plan for a future in which they may no longer be able to advocate for themselves.

Final Reflection: Overall, I loved my summer experience at NYLAG and as an EJA fellow. I learned an incredible amount about trusts and estates, guardianship, Medicaid, and the many ways that thoughtful legal planning can help people maintain stability, dignity, and peace of mind. When I began the summer, I was drawn to the Advance Planning Practice because Property Law had been my favorite class during my first year of law school. I was interested in the legal issues surrounding estates, trusts, and property, but I did not yet understand how deeply personal this work could be. Over the course of the summer, I came to see that advance



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planning is about much more than drafting documents or navigating complicated legal systems. It is about helping people make decisions about their futures and ensuring that they have the support and resources they need to maintain control over their lives.

One of the most meaningful parts of the summer was getting to work with so many older New Yorkers. I was particularly struck by the heartbreaking relationship between aging and poverty, and by how much more difficult the challenges of aging can become when someone lacks financial or legal resources. Whether I was helping a client complete a Power of Attorney, working on a Medicaid appeal, assisting with a guardianship matter, or preparing estate planning documents, I saw how much even seemingly routine legal work can affect a person's quality of life. It was incredibly meaningful to know that, in small ways, I was helping clients plan for their futures while preserving their autonomy, dignity, and access to essential benefits.

My work with Holocaust survivors was especially meaningful to me as the granddaughter of a survivor. Helping survivors and their families complete Health Care Proxies and Powers of Attorney gave me a new appreciation for the human side of this work. These documents can seem technical and dry on paper but sitting across from a client and hearing about their life, their family, and their hopes for the future made clear how deeply personal they really are. That experience reinforced for me that good legal advocacy is not only about knowing the law; it is also about listening carefully to the people whose lives are affected by it.

I leave this summer with a much stronger commitment to expanding access to legal services. When I began my internship, I hoped that this fellowship would allow me to engage with trusts and estates in a more equitable way. After this summer, I understand much better what that means. I have seen firsthand how inaccessible these areas of law can be and how important it is to have lawyers who can help people navigate them with compassion and care. I am incredibly grateful to EJA and to the Frimmer Fellowship for making this experience possible. This fellowship was far more than financial support. It gave me the opportunity to discover a field of law that I care deeply about and to begin developing the kind of client-centered, public interest practice that I hope to carry with me throughout my career.