



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: Over the past two weeks at Mobilization for Justice, I have had the opportunity to work with attorneys in both the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic and Workplace Justice Project. I have found the opportunity to sit in on each group's weekly intake meetings to be incredibly informative. During those meetings, the attorneys discuss the calls they have received from prospective clients, consider what legal issues may be in play and walk through how Mobilization for Justice may be of assistance. It's been fascinating to see how individuals' problems and frustrations, such as an insurmountable tax debt or wrongful termination from a long-time job, can be translated into legal issues with clear next steps for resolution.

In the Workplace Justice Project, it has been particularly interesting to see where the attorneys draw the line between what is both unfair and illegal and what is simply unfair. Not everything that is unfair is illegal, which can be incredibly frustrating for the clients that call in. In the meetings, the attorneys speak about how they will compassionately lead the clients through that distinction when explaining what can or cannot be done to remedy the situation the client is experiencing.

Everyone at Mobilization for Justice has been kind and helpful as I learn about the work. I have already found my experience to be valuable, and I am excited to see what the rest of the summer will hold!

Update 2: Over the past few weeks at Mobilization of Justice I have had many opportunities to directly engage with clients. After shadowing several intake calls with attorneys, I have been trusted to make calls independently to take client information and learn more about the problem each client is facing to determine how Mobilization for Justice can be of assistance. After these calls, I have presented the information I've learned to the attorney team to issue spot



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and create an action plan. I went into this summer with the goal of gaining hands-on client experience in a direct legal services setting. With more than half the summer left, I'm excited to continue to serve clients and grow my comfort level with assisting individuals directly with their legal needs. When clients call, they are often in distress and the ability to listen and respond compassionately, while also teasing out the information necessary to see if there is a legal claim that we can assist with, is a skill that requires practice. The attorneys and fellow interns I work with have been amazing to shadow and learn from as I build this skill. As someone who is considering legal aid work after law school graduation, this experience has been formative.

Update 3: I am excited that Mobilization for Justice has given me the opportunity to work with both the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic and the Workplace Justice Project. Over the past few weeks I have gotten more exposure to the Workplace Justice Project. Recently, under the encouragement of my supervisor, I had the opportunity to complete the legal analysis on whether or not there was a strong workplace retaliation claim for a specific client. After analyzing the facts, relevant case law, and governing statutes, I discussed my analysis with my supervisor. We then called the client together to explain the strength of their legal claim. Doing legal research to come to my own conclusion and figuring out how to explain it clearly to both my supervisor and the client was a really informative experience. A simple IRAC feels different when you are writing with the intention of explaining the situation directly to the person impacted by the issue. The experience made me reflect on how much I had learned over the last year in law school and how impactful a legal education can be in a direct legal services setting. I'm looking forward to gaining more experience in the employment law space.

Update 4: At Mobilization for Justice, I've had more opportunities to engage with the Workplace Justice Project and build out my knowledge of workplace retaliation. I drafted a legal memo where I researched and assessed the strength of the legal claims that the attorney team had thought might be applicable to a client who had recently been terminated and who we believed had a strong workplace retaliation case. After researching, I ultimately determined that there was only one strong cause of action available to the client. My supervisor and I discussed how best to explain and present this cause of action to the client. It was very informative to see the process of assisting the client from start to finish: I assisted with the initial intake, conducted thorough legal research, and was then able to present the client with a clear path forward if they were interested in pursuing legal action.

I've also recently drafted a memo on employer misclassification, which occurs when employees are incorrectly classified as individual contractors on tax documents by their employer. Working on this memo allowed me to see some of the connections between the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic, which I focused on in the first half of the summer, and the Workplace Justice Project, which I focused on in the second half of the summer.



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Final Reflection: I really enjoyed my experience at Mobilization for Justice this summer. I went into the internship hoping to gain direct client experience and deepen my legal research skills. The attorneys I worked with intentionally gave me opportunities to do just that.

I had many opportunities for direct client contact. In my first few weeks, I was nervous to conduct intakes with clients, even with the attorney I was working with present on the call. By the end of my internship, I not only felt comfortable completing intakes independently, but had also started to build relationships with the clients I had worked with throughout the summer. My experience made me realize that I really enjoy direct legal services. For me, conducting legal research in a direct services setting felt more impactful than it had when I was doing legal research for class during my 1L year. At Mobilization for Justice, I conducted legal research to address the problems of specific individuals who had told me their stories directly and who would be impacted by what I found in my research. This made the process of doing research for clients incredibly motivating and rewarding.

I also further developed my legal research and writing skills by drafting memos for both the Workplace Justice Project and Low-Income Taxpayer clinic. In doing so, I explored new research tools (particularly in the tax context which I had little prior experience with!) and developed my ability to present information clearly and efficiently to attorneys who may benefit from it. These memos also helped me find overlap between the two projects that I had assisted with. For example, a memo I drafted on employer misclassification addressed relief available to workers who had been incorrectly classified as independent contractors, rather than employees, by their employers. This misclassification allowed companies to pay less in taxes while placing a huge tax burden on the individual. I realized that worker misclassification was an issue that both the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic, which I focused on in the first half of the summer, and the Workplace Justice Project, which I focused on in the second half of the summer, might help a client navigate. I think my research really benefited from the fact that I spent time in both groups.

Overall, I found my experience at Mobilization for Justice to be empowering. I realized that even after only one year of law school, I had legal skills that I could offer and that allowed me to assist people in need. I could find relevant precedent cases and assess the strength of possible legal claims. I could create an action plan with clear next steps for both the client and the attorneys. I could engage with clients and clearly explain the legal options available to them.

After my experience this summer, I hope to do more direct legal services in the future.