



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

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Update 1: So far this summer at Legal Aid DC, I've had the opportunity to learn what appellate advocacy looks like in practice and how much careful work goes into building a strong legal argument. So far, I've worked on a range of projects, including drafting an opening brief in an unemployment benefits case, writing a motion to seal records, and reviewing D.C. Court of Appeals dockets to identify cases where Legal Aid DC may be able to assist pro se litigants.

One of the biggest things I've learned is how different appellate advocacy is from the legal writing I did in law school. Every word matters, and effective advocacy requires not only understanding the law but also thinking strategically about how to tell a client's story through the record and legal arguments. I've also gained a deeper appreciation for the role appellate work can play in expanding access to justice. Even small procedural barriers can have a major impact on someone's ability to navigate the legal system, especially without representation.

I've especially enjoyed working with attorneys who are deeply committed to serving low-income clients. Seeing how they combine rigorous legal analysis with a strong sense of mission has reinforced my interest in public interest law and reminded me why I came to law school in the first place.

Update 2: So far, my summer as an EJA Fellow at Legal Aid DC has been incredibly rewarding. I've had the opportunity to contribute to a variety of matters affecting low-income clients, while developing practical legal skills and gaining firsthand exposure to client-centered advocacy. One of the most meaningful projects I've gotten to help with is assisting clients with record sealing motions.

In these cases, I review court records, research eligibility requirements, interview clients, and draft motions explaining why sealing their records serves both their interests and the interests of justice. Much of this work involves helping clients tell their stories about how they have grown since their criminal convictions.



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A particularly rewarding aspect of this work has been the opportunity to interact directly with clients. Through client interviews, I learn about their families, employment histories, community involvement, and future goals. Many clients have spent years building stable lives, raising children, maintaining employment, and contributing to their communities, yet continue to face obstacles in housing and employment because of decades-old records. Speaking with these individuals has reinforced to me how legal advocacy can have a massive impact on someone's daily life and future opportunities. This experience has taught me the importance of listening carefully and approaching every client with empathy. Most importantly, I have gained a deeper appreciation for how legal services can help remove barriers and create second chances for individuals and their families.

Update 3: This summer at Legal Aid DC, I have had the opportunity to develop my legal research and writing skills through meaningful appellate advocacy work. Much of my work has involved cite-checking and Bluebooking briefs and other filings, experiences that have strengthened my attention to detail and deepened my understanding of effective legal writing. Reviewing and editing experienced attorneys' work has taught me how to write more clearly, precisely, and persuasively while ensuring that legal arguments are thoroughly supported and accurately cited.

In addition to editing and citation work, I have been entrusted with significant substantive responsibility. I was assigned to draft an appellate brief challenging the denial of unemployment benefits, conducting legal research, developing arguments, and incorporating extensive feedback from supervising attorneys through multiple rounds of revision. Receiving detailed comments on my writing has been one of the most valuable aspects of the internship, helping me refine my advocacy skills and better understand how to craft persuasive legal arguments for a court.

Overall, the internship has provided hands-on experience with every stage of the appellate writing process—from research and citation to drafting, revising, and polishing briefs. It has been an invaluable opportunity to improve both my technical legal writing skills and my ability to communicate complex legal issues in a clear, concise, and persuasive manner.

Update 4: As I near the end of my internship as an appellate intern at Legal Aid DC, I have been reflecting on how much I have learned as an advocate and a member of a legal community. One of the most meaningful parts of the summer has been getting to know the other interns. It has been energizing to work alongside people who share a commitment to public-interest law and to making the legal system accessible and fair. Through conversations about our cases, career goals, and experiences in law school, we have formed connections that I hope will continue beyond the internship.

I am grateful for the opportunity to draft an appellate brief and receive feedback as it moves through multiple rounds of editing. Each round has helped me see how strong appellate writing develops: through careful revision, sharper organization, precise use of the record, and attention to the reader. The feedback I have received has strengthened the brief and my confidence as a legal writer. As the internship comes to a close, I feel proud of the work I have contributed and grateful for the mentorship, friendships, and practical skills I will carry forward!



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Final Reflection: My summer at Legal Aid DC was an incredibly meaningful introduction to public interest legal practice and to the kind of lawyer I hope to become. Over the course of the fellowship, I had the opportunity to take on substantive responsibility, work closely with experienced attorneys, and see firsthand how careful legal advocacy can make a difference in a client's life.

One of the most rewarding parts of my fellowship was working on an unemployment benefits appeal before the D.C. Court of Appeals. I was involved in nearly every stage of the appellate process, from researching complex legal questions to drafting and revising the opening brief and helping prepare the case for filing. The experience challenged me to think carefully about how to turn a complicated factual record into a clear and persuasive legal argument. It also taught me how much strong appellate advocacy depends on precision: understanding the record, identifying the strongest legal theory, anticipating counterarguments, and making every sentence serve a purpose. Seeing an oral argument at the D.C. Court of Appeals further brought that work to life and gave me a better understanding of how written advocacy translates into the courtroom.

I also had the chance to work on projects beyond appeals, including a motion to seal a client's criminal record and resources designed to help pro se litigants navigate the civil legal system. Those assignments reminded me that effective legal advocacy can take many forms. Whether writing a brief, telling a client's story in a motion, or making an unfamiliar legal process more accessible, the goal is ultimately to use specialized legal knowledge in a way that effectively serves people.

Most importantly, I grew tremendously from working closely with my supervisors. Their thoughtful feedback pushed me to become a more precise writer and a more independent legal thinker, while the responsibility they entrusted to me gave me confidence in my ability to contribute to sophisticated legal work.

I leave Legal Aid DC with stronger research, writing, and advocacy skills, and a deeper understanding of appellate practice. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to learn from lawyers whose work demonstrates how rigorous legal advocacy and effective service to clients can go hand in hand.