



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: I'm part way through my second full week here at Legal Aid DC, interning with the Reentry Justice Project. I've been busy with events both in the office and out. Last week, we had the opportunity to attend the 3rd Annual D.C. Consortium of Legal Services Providers Intern Training, which provided a great opportunity for me to connect with other DC-based legal interns and to hear from some great speakers on topics like DC Statehood, client-centered advocacy, and working with interpreters. I also attended a virtual Fellowships 101 session with the Washington Council of Lawyers and representatives from EJW and Skadden, which gave me some great food for thought as I navigate next steps in my legal career. In the office, I've familiarized myself with the ins and out of the Second Chance Amendment Act, reviewed sample motions seeking sealing and expungement relief, attended an intake meeting, and researched the effects of criminal record relief on military base access. I'm preparing for my first client meeting later this week as well as a record sealing document gathering training, which will involve going to the courthouse and local police department. I'll also be attending a brown bag lunch talk with the OAG.

Update 2:

The past two weeks provided a great mix of direct client work, legal writing, and professional development. I met with two clients and shadowed an intake interview, which gave me valuable insight into client-centered advocacy and the challenges individuals face when seeking legal assistance. On the litigation side, I drafted a motion for sealing, allowing me to strengthen my legal research and writing skills. I also attended an organization-wide legal writing training that offered practical strategies for effective advocacy. Beyond casework, I had the opportunity to attend a brown bag lunch with the DC Office of the Attorney General, participate in a Reentry Justice Project intake meeting, and connect with a school alum over coffee to learn more about



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their career path and experiences in public interest law. One of the highlights since my last update was visiting both the court and a local police department to learn firsthand about the process of obtaining records and gathering evidence. Seeing these systems in action made me realize the onerous procedural hurdles pro se litigants must overcome to file the paperwork required for a motion to seal. Overall, the past two weeks were an exciting opportunity to engage with clients and develop substantive legal research and writing.

Update 3:

The past two weeks have been filled with opportunities to sharpen my legal writing, engage with clients, and learn from practitioners across a variety of settings. I drafted two motions seeking sealing relief, which gave me the opportunity to continue strengthening my legal research and writing skills while becoming more familiar with the procedural requirements involved in post-conviction advocacy. I also participated in intake review meetings, which allowed me to gain additional experience evaluating potential cases and discussing legal strategy. Beyond my casework, I attended two engaging training sessions—one focused on appellate advocacy and another examined the Supreme Court's recent *Slaughter* decision. These offered valuable insight into effective advocacy and current legal developments. I also enjoyed grabbing coffee with an attorney in the Housing Unit to learn more about their work and career path in public interest law. One of the highlights of the past two weeks was meeting with a judge on the Fifth Circuit and hearing about the judge's experiences on the bench. I also toured the D.C. Superior Court and observed an initial custody hearing, which provided a firsthand look at courtroom procedure and the dynamics of family law proceedings. Overall, the past two weeks have been an exciting opportunity to continue developing my legal skills while learning from advocates and judges.

Update 4:

Over the past two weeks, I have continued working on motions to seal criminal records. I have also contributed to developing pro se record-sealing materials, with the goal of making the process more accessible to individuals navigating the legal system without an attorney. In addition to this work, I participated in the HIPS & DC Peace Team Trauma-Informed De-escalation Training, which provided practical strategies for responding to challenging situations with empathy and an understanding of trauma-informed practices. I also had the opportunity to tour both the D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Court of Appeals, followed by a Q&A session with several judges. Hearing about their career paths and perspectives on the judiciary was an especially valuable learning experience. To learn more about different areas of public interest law, I met with both a family law attorney and a consumer law attorney for coffee chats. These conversations gave me insight into their day-to-day practice, career trajectories, and the ways they advocate for clients in their respective fields. Finally, I attended the Washington Council of Lawyers' 2026 Summer Pro Bono & Public Interest Forum, where I participated in sessions



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focused on civil rights and the death penalty. These discussions broadened my understanding of current issues in public interest law.

Final Reflection:

My summer internship with Legal Aid DC's Reentry Justice Project has been an experience that challenged me, taught me a lot, and gave me a much better understanding of what legal aid work looks like in practice. Coming into the summer, I was excited to develop my legal research and writing skills, but I did not expect how much I would learn from working directly with clients and seeing firsthand the barriers people can face when navigating the legal system.

One of the most meaningful parts of my experience was interviewing clients seeking to seal their criminal records. Hearing directly from clients helped put my work into perspective. A motion to seal might seem like a fairly straightforward legal document, but for a client, having a record sealed can affect their ability to find a job, secure housing, or move forward with opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach. As I became more comfortable with client interviews, I also learned how important it is to listen carefully and make sure that I understood not just the legal issue, but what the client hoped to accomplish.

I also spent a lot of time drafting motions to seal and helping develop materials for people who are navigating the record-sealing process without an attorney. These projects pushed me to improve my legal research and writing, but they also made me think more about accessibility. Earlier in the semester, I visited the courthouse and the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department to learn how to gather the records needed for a sealing motion. Seeing the process firsthand made it clear just how difficult some of these steps can be for someone trying to do everything on their own. Working on pro se materials later in the semester felt especially meaningful because I could help make that process a little easier to understand.

Outside of my casework, I had the chance to attend trainings, panels, and outreach events that exposed me to different areas of public interest law. I especially enjoyed meeting attorneys and judges and hearing about their career paths and experiences. Attending an outreach event in a D.C. ward also reminded me that legal advocacy is not just about what happens in an office or courtroom; it is about connecting with the communities we serve.

Looking back, I am leaving this summer with stronger legal research and writing skills, client counseling experience, and a better sense of the kind of lawyer I want to be. This experience taught me that good advocacy starts with listening, understanding, and meeting people where they are.