



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



NAME	Kaitlin Ingram
LAW SCHOOL	Howard University School of Law
ORGANIZATION	Legal Aid DC

Update 1: This summer at Legal Aid DC, I am the Legal Intern for the Systemic Advocacy and Law Reform unit. During my first few weeks, I quickly learned how Legal Aid's various practice areas overlap and work together to advocate for individual clients.

For example, on one of my first projects my unit is collaborating with the housing unit on a landlord-tenant dispute. The housing team represents the client's defense to a wrongful eviction, while the systemic team researches potential affirmative claims the client may have against the landlord. As part of the assignment, I have had the opportunity to immerse myself in two different areas of law: housing law and consumer protection law. Projects like this demonstrate the significance of legal aid work. Due to the breadth of expertise, Legal Aid DC is able to provide support to an expansive demographic of clients who are dealing with various different legal issues.

In just a few weeks, this legal experience has reinforced the importance of collaboration in public interest law. I have seen how attorneys across different units work together to address both the immediate legal needs of clients and the broader systemic issues underlying their cases. It has been especially interesting to see how systemic advocacy connects with direct services to make an impact at both the individual and community level. I am excited to continue exploring new areas of law and developing the research skills necessary to support individual clients and broader reform.

Update 2: Over the past few weeks at Legal Aid DC, I have continued to build my legal research skills while gaining more hands-on litigation experience. Much of my work has involved researching unfamiliar areas of law and preparing memoranda to help attorneys evaluate potential claims and develop case strategies. Each assignment has challenged me to issue spot and think critically about how legal research can be turned into practical advocacy for clients.

In addition to my research projects, I recently had the opportunity to help prepare a client for an upcoming deposition. Working directly with the client gave me a new appreciation



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

for the role attorneys play in helping clients understand the legal process and making them feel prepared to participate in it. I learned that effective advocacy is not just about how well you know the law; it also requires meeting clients where they are, listening to their concerns, and adapting your approach to ensure they feel heard and supported throughout the process.

This experience demonstrated the role legal aid plays in expanding access to justice. By combining compassionate, client-centered representation with strategic legal advocacy, legal aid attorneys are uniquely equipped to serve clients whose legal challenges are often shaped by financial hardship and broader systemic issues. Too often, these barriers stand in the way of access to justice. Witnessing that balance in practice has reinforced that meaningful advocacy is not only about winning cases, but also about ensuring that clients are seen, heard, and supported while navigating an overwhelming legal system.

Update 3: During my time at Legal Aid DC, I have continued to develop my legal research and analytical skills through assignments that require me to think strategically about potential claims and remedies. My recent project involved creating a comparison chart of state and federal statutes to evaluate different pathways for recovery and ultimately determine which legal framework would best support the client's goals. This assignment challenged me to move beyond simply identifying the issues and applicable law; I had to consider how different statutes, remedies, and procedural requirements could shape the direction of a case.

Additionally, I had the opportunity to assist with drafting the facts section of an opposition to a motion to dismiss. For this particular case, Legal Aid DC partnered with a law firm to advocate on behalf of the client. This assignment taught me how to connect the facts with case law and develop a litigation strategy. Drafting the facts section required careful consideration of which facts were most important to the client's claims and how those facts could be shaped into a persuasive argument. It also gave me the opportunity to further develop my written advocacy skills.

This collaboration highlighted the important role legal aid organizations play in expanding access to legal representation. Through partnerships with pro bono units, legal aid attorneys are able to connect clients with additional resources. The additional expertise and support offered through these partnerships allow legal aid attorneys to explore all available options and develop comprehensive litigation strategies to best serve the clients' interests.

Update 4: One of the most valuable lessons I have learned during my internship at Legal Aid DC is the importance of looking beyond the legal issue that initially brings a client through the door. Clients often seek assistance for a specific problem, and they may not be aware of the full range of underlying legal issues or remedies available to them. Throughout the summer, I have worked on research assignments that required me to evaluate potential claims, compare legal frameworks, and identify additional avenues for relief that could better serve a client's needs. Additionally, I have observed how legal aid attorneys go above and beyond for their clients to ensure that even those concerns that they were unaware of or had dismissed as trivial were addressed.



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

These experiences have demonstrated the importance of the holistic approach legal aid attorneys take when representing their clients. Instead of solely focusing on the immediate legal issue, attorneys do their due diligence to carefully assess each client's circumstances and develop strategies that address the client's broader legal needs. Through my research assignments, I have seen firsthand how comprehensive and thoughtful legal research can uncover advocacy pathways that might otherwise be overlooked. It truly has been rewarding to contribute to the holistic advocacy that helps ensure clients leave with more answers than the ones they came seeking.

Final Reflection: When I began my summer at Legal Aid DC, I expected to strengthen my legal research skills and gain more exposure to litigation. I did both, in addition to developing a much deeper understanding of what client-centered advocacy looks like in practice. As a Legal Intern in the Systemic Advocacy and Law Reform unit, I worked on a wide range of assignments, from researching unfamiliar areas of law and comparing state and federal statutes to assisting with litigation and preparing a client for a deposition. These experiences challenged me to think beyond simply issue spotting and instead consider how legal research, strategy, and advocacy can be used to address a client's specific needs.

Much of my work this summer was centered on impact litigation, which gave me a new understanding of how individual cases can be used to address broader legal and systemic issues. I saw how attorneys identified cases where a client's circumstances revealed a larger problem and used litigation not only to seek relief for that individual, but also to challenge practices that affect others facing similar barriers. My research assignments contributed to this work by requiring me to investigate potential claims, evaluate different legal theories and remedies, and consider how the outcome of a case could have implications beyond the individual client.

Ultimately, this fellowship has strengthened both my legal skills and my confidence as a future attorney. I have learned to approach unfamiliar legal problems with greater curiosity and persistence, while remaining focused on the needs of the people affected by them. Most importantly, this experience has shown me the value of advocacy that approaches every client's case holistically and goes beyond the initial issue the client has readily identified. Attorneys have a responsibility to meet clients with patience and thoroughness and to provide solutions and answers to the questions clients often don't know to ask. By taking this initiative, legal aid can give clients more than a solution to an immediate problem; it can give them the knowledge and confidence to recognize their rights, understand their options, and better navigate future legal challenges with greater independence. That's what separates legal aid from paid representation: knowing that a client's limited means makes it even more important that the advice they receive serves them beyond the immediate legal issue and prepares them for the future. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to spend this summer learning from attorneys who are committed to this important mission and contributing to work that has shaped how I want to advocate for my future clients.