



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1:

I am pleased to announce that I have been selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow for Summer 2026! As part of my fellowship, I will be posting periodic updates about my internship at Life Span to help illuminate the important work that public interest organizations play in creating a fairer and more equitable legal system. Life Span provides comprehensive legal counseling, and immigration services to survivors of domestic and sexual violence in the Chicagoland community. As a family law intern, I have had the opportunity to assist and shadow the family law team as they cater to the civil legal needs of survivors through orders of protection, parentage, and divorce cases. As a non-profit, Life Span's clients receive these services free of charge. Working with survivors has been deeply inspirational; their strength and resilience as they navigate the daunting and often laborious legal system is commendable. I am honored to be even a small footnote in their story. As a Spanish speaker, I have also been given the unique opportunity to hone my legal skills in another language, which has been every bit as rewarding as it has been challenging. In fact, I am due to conduct my first intake call this week, entirely in Spanish!

Update 2: I have now officially been at Life Span for 5 weeks, and I have learned so much! I have gotten more experience drafting pleadings and motions for dissolutions of marriage, allocated parenting time, and orders of protection. These tasks were daunting at first, but with the guidance of the wonderful attorneys and paralegals at Life Span, I have started to be more comfortable completing these tasks! I have also gotten more experience in the domestic relations court through shadowing status hearings both in person and over Zoom. By far, the most rewarding part has been the increased responsibility and trust that I have been given when interacting with clients. I have conducted long intake calls and have also had the pleasure of walking clients through what is happening in their case and the next steps. These interactions



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have helped ground me, as it puts all of my work into perspective. The 3 hours it took me to draft up a motion has a real-world impact on my clients and given that I work with survivors of domestic violence, that often translates to an increased sense of safety away from their abusers. I am excited to continue learning and growing during my remaining time at Life Span!

Update 3: I am officially a little over the midpoint of my summer at Life Span! I have had the opportunity to undergo a training session on trauma informed care, an important cornerstone in working with survivors of domestic violence. This unique opportunity to work closely with clients, especially in a way that centers their needs and emotions, has been an invaluable part of my summer. The added bonus of being able to practice these skills in my native language of Spanish has also been a great benefit. As the summer progresses, I am also getting more comfortable drafting motions, interrogatories, and other pleadings. The mentorship and support I have found at Life Span has been instrumental in paving my path in public service. I have enjoyed my time at this organization so much, that I plan to return during the spring semester. I am excited for what's to come, and I can think of no better organization than Life Span to extend at once I get my 711 license.

Update 4: I am less than a week away from finishing up my internship at Life Span, and I could not be happier with my time here! Since my last update, I have had the pleasure of attending several Plenary Order of Protection hearings. For one of those hearings, I had previously worked on the client's case. Being able to attend the hearing and walk the client through what was happening during the hearing felt like a full circle moment, and I was able to see how far I have come in understanding family court proceedings. In addition to shadowing court, my supervisor arranged for me and the other family law clerks to shadow our criminal advocacy team at domestic violence court. The experience was different than what I was used to in civil court and was all around a great learning experience. I am grateful to be at an organization that encourages me to explore different facets of public interest lawyering. I am wrapping up my remaining week with gratitude, both for the experiences I have gathered as long as the colleagues and clients that have shaped me along the way.

Final Reflection: I am officially done with my summer internship at Life Span! This is definitely a bittersweet moment. With the exception of volunteering at another legal aid organization during the spring semester, I had little to no legal experience before beginning my internship back in May. This summer I conducted intake calls, attended court proceedings, learned about trauma-informed care, and drafted countless documents, notes, and pleadings. However, the interactions I had with clients were by far my favorite part of the internship.

One of my last tasks was drafting an amended affidavit for a Spanish-speaking client. Drafting our two-hour-long phone conversation into a document to be presented and filed in court felt



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like a full-circle moment. Helping a client find her voice in the court of law is something I did not take lightly, and I am grateful that she had the trust and faith in me to bring her story to life. Working with survivors of domestic violence has been the most challenging yet rewarding experience of my professional career. Seeing clients thrive and advocate for themselves and their loved ones helped mitigate the heaviness.

Additionally, I learned so much from the staff at Life Span! The paralegals were my rock as I navigated drafting unfamiliar forms, and they helped train me in my work with Spanish-speaking clients. The attorneys were great mentors and never hesitated to share advice and intel on their own journey as public interest lawyers. The office support staff kept the energy up and reminded me to think positively. I also learned a good deal from my co-interns. They made navigating this new domain of gender-based violence advocacy less daunting and were always there to provide me with a good laugh. I could not have completed this summer without all of their aid and support.

I am immensely grateful that the first taste of my legal profession was at such a warm and welcoming organization! Life Span helped me visualize what my career will hopefully someday look like. I am excited to return to the organization in spring, this time ready to assist with my 711 license!