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Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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ORGANIZATION	North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services

Update 1: My first week at North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services was both informative and meaningful. During orientation, I learned about the organization's mission, policies, and expectations, as well as the importance of professionalism and confidentiality in serving incarcerated individuals. The staff created a welcoming environment and encouraged me to ask questions, which helped me feel comfortable as I began my internship. We also discussed my interest in public interest law and what it means to advocate for individuals whose voices are often overlooked. Being able to contribute to that mission is one of the reasons I was excited to join the organization.

Throughout the week, I was assigned several projects that introduced me to different aspects of the organization's work. One of my primary assignments involved assisting with 25-year review petitions, which provide certain incarcerated individuals an opportunity to be considered for parole after serving a significant portion of their sentence. My role included reviewing materials that help demonstrate an individual's growth, rehabilitation, and support system. I was also assigned a legal research project that allowed me to strengthen my research skills. I gained valuable insight into prisoner advocacy and look forward to continuing to learn and contribute throughout the summer.

Update 2: This week at North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services, I have been tackling several tasks assigned by my supervising attorneys. I am currently in the process of learning how to draft 25-year reviews and have continued building my understanding of that work. I have also been assisting with efforts to ensure that incarcerated individuals receive adequate medications. Working on this assignment has provided me with insight into an area of law with which I was previously unfamiliar.



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Furthermore, I have had the opportunity to sit in on informative staff meetings, which have been both valuable learning experiences and opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions with other members of the organization. Overall, my experience thus far has been incredibly rewarding, and I am grateful for everything I have learned. I believe that everything I have learned thus far will be very valuable for my future. Although I have only been interning for about three weeks, I already feel as though I fit right in with the other interns and attorneys at the organization. This experience has also reinforced the importance of legal aid in ensuring that incarcerated individuals have access to legal advocacy and that their legal concerns are carefully reviewed and addressed.

Update 3: Over the past two weeks, I have continued building on the experiences I shared in my previous reflection while taking on new assignments that have further developed my legal skills. I had the opportunity to draft a jail memo, where I evaluated a client's information to determine whether they had a viable legal claim. After reviewing the facts and applicable law, I concluded that the client's inadequate medical care claim did not meet the standard for our organization to pursue. This experience reinforced the importance of objectively analyzing facts and understanding that effective advocacy requires careful legal judgment.

As I mentioned in my previous reflection, I have continued working on a 25-year review petition for an incarcerated client. Since then, I have corresponded with my client to gather additional information to strengthen the petition, reinforcing the importance of thorough client communication and attention to detail.

One of my most meaningful assignments was participating in a prison visit, where I met with a client pursuing an inadequate medical care claim. Speaking with the client provided valuable insight into how the prison system works and strengthened my understanding of the importance of client interviews.

These experiences have continued to strengthen my legal analysis, communication, and advocacy skills, and I look forward to continuing to grow throughout the remainder of my internship.

Update 4: Over the past two weeks, I had the opportunity to participate in a staff event to Dix Park, where we met a formerly incarcerated woman who shared her experience of creating a quilt while incarcerated in a women's correctional facility during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each square of the quilt represented a deep personal story and reflected the experiences of incarcerated individuals, including survivors of domestic violence, individuals who struggled with self-harm, those separated from their families, and those who lost loved ones while incarcerated during the pandemic. Although the original quilt is preserved elsewhere, local artists in Durham created an art installation inspired by the quilt. Walking through the exhibit while hearing



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directly from one of the women who helped create the original quilt gave me a deeper appreciation for the power of art as a form of storytelling, healing, and advocacy. It reinforced the importance of recognizing the humanity and dignity of the individuals our organization serves.

I also completed drafting a 25-year review petition for one of my clients. It was rewarding to contribute to a case that has the potential to significantly impact someone's future, and I look forward to seeing how the matter progresses. This experience strengthened my legal research and writing skills while reminding me that even behind-the-scenes work can have a meaningful effect on the lives of those seeking justice.

Final Reflection: Being an intern at North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services has been a transformative experience that strengthened both my legal skills and my commitment to public interest law. At the beginning of the summer, I was eager to learn about prisoner advocacy and the work performed by legal aid organizations. By the conclusion of the fellowship, I gained practical experience applying principles to real cases while developing a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by incarcerated individuals.

Throughout my internship, I performed a wide range of substantive legal work, including drafting 25-year review petitions, preparing jail memoranda, conducting legal research, reviewing medication records, evaluating potential civil claims, corresponding with incarcerated clients, and participating in a prison visit.

One of the greatest challenges I encountered was learning to separate sympathy for a client's circumstances from the objective legal analysis required to determine whether a viable claim existed. Although some clients raised concerns that did not meet the legal standard for representation, every matter required careful review and thoughtful consideration.

Successfully completing assignments such as drafting a 25-year review petition and preparing detailed legal memoranda increased my confidence in my legal research, writing, and analytical abilities while demonstrating the importance of precision.

The clients I served throughout the fellowship reinforced the significance of legal aid. Whether assisting with a petition that could affect an individual's opportunity for future release, reviewing concerns regarding access to prescribed medications, or meeting with an incarcerated client during a prison visit, each experience reminded me that every case represents a person whose voice deserves to be heard. Hearing a formerly incarcerated woman discuss her experiences through the Dix Park quilt exhibit further reinforced the humanity of the individuals served by North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services and the lasting impact that advocacy can have beyond the courtroom.



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This experience has had a lasting impact on my professional development. It strengthened my legal research, writing, client communication, and analytical skills while reaffirming my commitment to pursuing a career in public interest law. Most importantly, it demonstrated that effective advocacy requires not only legal knowledge, but also integrity, compassion, and a genuine commitment to ensuring access to justice for underserved communities.