



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

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EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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Update 1: These first two weeks of my internship have been extremely insightful as to what legal aid in Immigration looks like. I have already learned so much and yet there is still so much to experience. I have so far dipped my toes into many different areas of immigration such as Special Immigrant Juvenile Status adjustments for children who were abused by their parents, U-visas designed to help victims of qualifying crimes, VAWAS which provides relief for domestic abuse victims and Asylum. Currently, my focus right now has been working on two different clients who are seeking asylum. One is seeking asylum based on their LGBTQ and religious identity. This client fled their country because they were almost beaten to death for being part of the LGBTQ community, where the country's police officers did so because it is a crime. My second client is seeking asylum through the fact that she experienced Female Genital Mutilation as a young girl and was then later forced into a marriage and abused severely until she was able to escape. I will be working on these two stories throughout the summer, and it is an honor to do so. To see and speak to these clients, who are willing to share these extremely difficult stories and are fighting to live a normal life is incredibly inspiring to see firsthand. The strength these clients have is wonderful to experience and I feel privileged to help them.

Update 2: These past couple of weeks at Greater Boston Legal Services have further solidified my desire to continue working with the immigrant community. While my first few weeks were primarily focused on training and learning the procedures of the Immigration Unit, I have gradually been given greater responsibility as the "training wheels" have come off. I am now managing my own clients and taking ownership of moving their cases forward under the guidance of supervising attorneys.

One of my clients has been particularly difficult to reach. Much of the challenge stems from the emotional difficulty of discussing past trauma, as well as ongoing family issues that have made communication inconsistent. Although I have not yet been able to connect with her,



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this experience has reinforced the importance of patience, empathy, and persistence when working with vulnerable clients. Every interaction requires meeting clients where they are and understanding that legal representation often extends beyond simply completing paperwork.

In the meantime, I have been assigned two additional clients, giving me the opportunity to continue developing my client management and case-handling skills. I have also begun working in a new area of immigration law involving the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). I will be assisting a woman who is seeking both asylum and immigration relief under VAWA, and we are starting her case from the very beginning. I am excited to gain experience with a new form of humanitarian relief and to deepen my understanding of how different areas of immigration law intersect. Each new case continues to strengthen my legal skills while reminding me why I chose to pursue a career advocating for immigrant communities.

Update 3: I have officially been at Greater Boston Legal Services for more than a month now, and it has been an incredible experience. I did not expect to have as much direct client communication as I have, but it has helped me grow a lot. I remember when my supervisor told me I would eventually be conducting client interviews on my own and at the time, I was terrified. Now, after interviewing clients independently many times, each conversation becomes a little easier. As I become more familiar with a client's case and build rapport with them, it becomes much more natural to ask follow-up questions and gather the information needed to move their case forward.

One of the most difficult parts of this work is listening to my clients' stories. Many have experienced unimaginable hardship, trauma, and uncertainty. There are times when I need to take a few minutes for myself after an interview to process everything I have heard before moving on to the next task. This experience has shown me that being an effective advocate also means recognizing the importance of caring for yourself.

Over the past month, I have learned just how much I am capable of handling. I am balancing multiple clients and learning how to manage competing responsibilities. Although immigration cases often move slowly, there are moments that make all the work worthwhile. Seeing a client's excitement when they receive their first work permit or finally obtain a Social Security card reminds me why I chose this field.

Update 4: As my internship at Greater Boston Legal Services continues, what began as an opportunity to learn immigration law has become an experience where I feel invested in my clients and their futures. I have become attached to many of the individuals I work with, making every success feel rewarding and every setback feel personal.

This summer, I have been fortunate to work under two supervisors with different areas of expertise. One focuses on U-Visas and Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJ), while the other specializes in gender-based asylum claims. Seeing these different practice areas has broadened my understanding of the many ways immigration law can provide protection to vulnerable individuals.



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One of the newer experiences of mine has been managing my own U-Visa case from the very beginning. I submitted the request for the client's police certification, an important step that often takes months to process. While we wait, I have been meeting with her to prepare her affidavit, carefully documenting the crime she experienced and helping her gather supporting evidence and court records. Having ownership over a case has given me a deeper appreciation for the trust clients place in their attorneys and the importance of guiding them through what can be an emotionally difficult process.

Beyond the legal work, I have also enjoyed connecting with the other interns, who understand both the challenges and the rewards of this work. I am grateful that I will be continuing at GBLS this fall and look forward to continuing to advocate for my clients.

Final Reflection: This semester at Greater Boston Legal Services has been a very meaningful experience for me. I have worked on cases involving asylum, U-Visas, Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, and VAWA, representing clients who have experienced abuse, violence, and persecution. More importantly, I have learned what it means to work directly with clients and advocate for them through some of the most difficult periods of their lives.

One of the most significant parts of my experience has been developing direct relationships with my clients. At the beginning of the summer, I was nervous about conducting client interviews on my own. Now, after conducting numerous interviews independently, I have learned how to build rapport, ask difficult follow-up questions, and gather the information necessary to move a case forward. I have also learned that effective advocacy requires patience and flexibility. Sometimes, even something as seemingly simple as communication can become a challenge. Working through an interpreter can make it difficult to establish the same connection that comes naturally when speaking directly with a client, and it can be frustrating for everyone when important information is difficult to communicate.

One client in particular was struggling to connect with me, and I initially worried that I was not doing enough to make her comfortable. After we were able to arrange an in-person interpreter, I noticed an immediate difference. The client became much more comfortable, our conversations became more natural, and I was finally able to gather the information we needed. That experience was a small but significant breakthrough for me. It reminded me that good advocacy is not always about finding the right legal argument. It is also about figuring out what works best for the individual client.

The emotional weight of this work has also been a challenge. Hearing clients recount unimaginable experiences can be difficult, but small victories, like seeing a client receive a work permit or Social Security card, have reminded me why this work matters.

This fellowship has strengthened my commitment to serving immigrant communities and taught me that meaningful advocacy requires not only legal knowledge, but also patience, adaptability, and genuine connection. I am grateful to continue at GBLS this fall and build on what this experience has taught me.