



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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ORGANIZATION	Homeless Advocacy Project

Update 1: This summer is off to a great start! I am happy to share that I just completed my third week with the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP), an organization that provides direct civil legal services to those experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia.

So far, my favorite part of this summer internship has been attending the weekly legal clinics that HAP holds just down the street at Broad Street Love. At these clinics, my colleagues and I meet one-on-one with unhoused individuals who come to Broad Street Love seeking legal assistance. Nearly every person I've sat down with so far has come to our table feeling frustrated, confused, or overwhelmed by some legal issue—usually something related to obtaining housing or federal benefits. And while I am far from an expert on the issues that have crossed my plate, I have already seen the impact that a listening ear and a willing supporter can have in helping people navigate their legal challenges.

I was only able to accept this summer internship thanks to generous support from Equal Justice America (EJA), an organization that provides funding to law students with a demonstrated commitment to public interest law. If you are interested in supporting future public interest lawyers like me, please consider donating to EJA.

Update 2: I hope everyone is having a wonderful summer! I just completed my fifth week with the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP) in Philadelphia. I cannot believe how quickly my time at HAP is flying by!

This week, I had the pleasure of attending the Community Resource Fair at JEVS Human Services with HAP attorney Pat Malley. Pat and I had a wonderful time speaking with community members at the resource fair. We spoke with attendees about our organization and distributed resources concerning the most common legal issues that unhoused and housing insecure



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individuals face. We also spoke at length with several attendees who raised specific legal questions, and it was incredibly rewarding to be able to hear their stories and provide guidance and support.

This was my first time tabling at an event like this, and I truly enjoyed meeting with so many community members, including case workers and other advocates, to discuss the services that HAP provides. I am very grateful to the wonderful team at JEVS Work Ready for putting this opportunity together!

Update 3: Summer is in full swing here in Philadelphia, and somehow, I just completed my seventh week with the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP).

For my third EJA Fellow Update, I am very pleased to share some exciting news—one of the SSI applications I've been collaborating on was approved earlier this week! This means that our client, who has been unemployed and unhoused for years due to mental illness, will finally begin receiving the support she needs to take the next steps toward obtaining her own housing. I am so happy to have contributed to this success, and I am looking forward to incorporating the insights I gained while working on this application into the others I hope to file before the end of the summer.

Otherwise, it has been a very busy couple of weeks at our drop-in legal clinics. Philadelphia recently experienced a heat emergency, which of course presented serious risks to those living without shelter. Fortunately, we were able to host our regular legal clinic at Broad Street Love, which served as a cooling center during the emergency. There were more people at Broad Street that day than I have seen so far this summer. As upsetting as it was to see so many people in distress, it was also incredibly uplifting to see the community of attorneys, case managers, and volunteers working together to help. I feel incredibly lucky for this opportunity to witness such extraordinary advocates in action.

Update 4: The end of summer is closing in quickly, and I just completed my ninth week with the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP)!

For my fourth #EJAFellowUpdate, I am excited to share that I successfully filed my first claim for SSI benefits this week. I met this particular client at the beginning of the summer—his was the first case I was assigned to handle by myself from start to finish. Over the past few weeks, I have met regularly with him and his case manager to talk about his mental health. We have discussed the experiences that have shaped who he is today, his goals for his future, and the symptoms that limit him in achieving those goals. I incorporated my insights from our conversations into his application, along with hundreds of pages of medical records from prior hospitalizations and treatment programs. Now, his application rests in the hands of an adjudicator, who will



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determine whether he is eligible to receive SSI benefits. I am hopeful I will be able to share some good news with him before the summer is out!

Final Reflection: And with that, I have completed my internship with the Homeless Advocacy Project (HAP). For my fifth and final EJA Fellow Update, I'd like to share some of my takeaways from the summer—and shout out the wonderful team at HAP for providing such an incredible internship experience.

When I first started at HAP, I knew next to nothing about the bureaucratic hoops that unhoused people have to jump through in order to access basic resources. I had no idea how difficult it can be to obtain housing without a birth certificate, for example, or how much legwork it takes to apply for SSI. I quickly came to realize that, while in theory public benefits are accessible to anyone who needs them, in reality, those resources are gatekept behind mountains of convoluted paperwork and months-long cycles of applications and appeals. For anyone who lacks the time, energy, or ability to sit down and figure out how it all works—as many unhoused people do—the chances of successfully accessing essential benefits are slim to none.

Another thing I found particularly shocking is how high the bar is to qualify for SSI. Generally speaking, it is exceptionally difficult to obtain SSI based on a physical health condition. To be eligible as an amputee, for example, you have to have had at least two limbs amputated—one is apparently not enough. And the bar is only slightly lower for those seeking SSI based on mental health conditions. I had multiple clients recount jobs they had lost because they couldn't keep up with their peers in the workplace, couldn't get through shifts without suffering panic attacks, or couldn't get to work at all because severe anxiety, depression, or PTSD symptoms kept them at home. The reality that so many people in our community are struggling with these things is upsetting enough. But the fact that our welfare system frequently tells them, "It doesn't seem like you need help; you just need to try harder," is completely unacceptable.

As often as I found myself feeling angry or powerless this summer, my colleagues at HAP continually provided me with reasons to hope. Each and every staff member took the time to get to know me and my fellow interns, to create opportunities for us to shadow them, and to provide direct feedback on our work both in the office and at the community legal clinics. I particularly want to thank Joel Sobel and Andrew Feigenbaum, Esq. for their mentorship, without which I would not have been able to accomplish much of anything for our clients.

Finally, I want to reiterate my gratitude to Equal Justice America for making this internship possible. Without their generous support, I would not have been able to join this team or assist any of the clients I worked with this summer. As ever, if you are interested in supporting Equal Justice America and its efforts to support future public interest lawyers like me, please consider donating. Thank you!