



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



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LAW SCHOOL	University of Illinois College of Law
ORGANIZATION	Prairie State Legal Services

Update 1: I have completed my first three weeks as an Equal Justice America Fellow with Prairie State Legal Services in Peoria Office. It has been a fast-paced, eye-opening, and incredibly grounding experience. Most of my time so far has been spent in eviction court. Stepping out of the classroom and into a live courtroom makes you realize very quickly how high the stakes are in civil legal aid. Navigating an eviction without legal representation is an incredibly stressful and confusing process for most tenants and seeing how much of a difference timely legal representation makes has been profound. It really reminds me why I chose to pursue public interest law in the first place. I am incredibly grateful to Equal Justice America for funding this fellowship and allowing me to put what I've learned at University of Illinois College of Law into practice. I'm looking forward to diving deeper into my cases and gaining more litigation experience over the coming weeks! #EJAFellowUpdate #Prairie State Legal Services #University of Illinois College of Law

Update 2: Hi everyone! I'm excited to share my EJA Fellow Update as I continue my summer internship at Prairie State Legal Services in Peoria Office! These past few weeks have been an incredible deep dive into the legal system. Compared to before, I'm taking on much more independent tasks and communicating directly with clients this year, which has been an amazing experience. From observing hearings in eviction and family law courts to managing independent legal research, the experience is very rewarding. Through this hands-on work, I've gained so much confidence in managing client files independently and making a real difference for our community. Seeing the direct impact of our advocacy on people's lives has truly reinforced my passion for public interest law. I am incredibly grateful to Equal Justice America and University of Illinois College of Law for making this work possible!



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Update 3: This summer has been such a pivotal chapter in my legal education, especially getting to step into the courtroom and handle client matters in person. A major highlight recently was having the opportunity to shadow a full trial for a Order of Protection case. Watching experienced public interest attorneys in my office litigate in real-time was incredibly inspiring. Seeing how high the stakes are for the communities we serve has completely solidified my passion for this work and made me even more driven to pursue a career in litigation. I am so grateful to Equal Justice America and University of Illinois College of Law for supporting my summer internship and making this invaluable hands-on experience possible.

Update 4: Time flies! As my summer internship comes to an end, I'm reflecting on how deeply grateful I am for this incredible experience. Working directly with clients and navigating the realities of public interest law has been incredibly rewarding and eye-opening. More than anything, I am so thankful for the amazing office environment in Prairie State Legal Services. From day one, the attorneys and staff created such a warm, supportive, and collaborative space. Having mentors who were always patient, ready to answer my questions, and genuinely invested in my growth made all the difference. Being surrounded by people who are so passionate about access to justice made even the challenging days rewarding. A huge thank you to @Equal Justice America and University of Illinois College of Law for supporting my journey as an EJA fellow this summer. The work being done in legal aid is so vital, and I'm proud to have been a part of this team.

Final Reflection: By the end of my 2026 Summer Internship, I look back on the amazing summer experience that fundamentally shaped my professional ambition and independence. I really appreciated the help from University of Illinois College of Law, and Equal Justice America. During my time as an intern in Prairie State Legal Services, I served as the primary associate on a criminal sealing case. This valuable opportunity allowed me to take full responsibility for the legal process, from mapping out timelines and managing client documents to proactively keeping my supervisor updated. In doing so, I elevated my core personal strengths of empathy and emotional stability with active project management skills, effectively guiding clients through the challenging legal process while ensuring every deadline was strictly met.

I also overcame some challenges and proactively learned from this experience. Throughout the summer, navigating unpredictable schedule conflicts provided valuable lessons for me to improve my adaptability. In the beginning of the internship, there were short-notice court hearings, and they always disrupted my workflow. I learned to anticipate potential dates during weekly check-ins with my supervisors rather than just reacting to the last-minute changes. Working with senior colleagues in office on complex appellate matters also taught me how to ask for meaningful assignments. I realized that general offers of help, like "let me know if there is anything I can help," rarely lead to substantive work. This result inspired me to ask more



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targeted questions by identifying specific issues within case files before requesting assignments. I got the chance to explore my potential interest among housing law, criminal sealing and expungement, family law and appellate advocacy work. This variety of work inspired my long-term goal to be well-rounded for the legal aid career.

Finally, this internship reinforced my dedication to public interest work while expanding my career horizons. Successfully managing the cases demonstrated the life-changing impact of record relief for our clients who were seeking employment. And family law matters were far more rewarding than I had previously anticipated. Furthermore, observing the day-to-day courtroom operations sparked a new interest in figuring out the logic behind the judicial decision-making. It inspires me to add a future judicial clerkship to my career goals so that I can return to direct client representation as a more insightful advocate. I cannot gain the value opportunity for my personal growth and dedication to the legal aid career without the help from EJA, my law school, and the placement Prairie State Legal Services.

Thank you so much for all your help and guidance! I am especially glad to know that this support will continue to benefit future fellows next summer.