



# EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

**Summer 2026**

## EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT



|                     |                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
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| <b>LAW SCHOOL</b>   | Washington & Lee                   |
| <b>ORGANIZATION</b> | Central Virginia Legal Aid Society |

**Update 1:** I'm excited to share that I've started my Equal Justice America fellowship this summer with Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS) and have already gained experience in a variety of practice areas. I've written a supporting memorandum in an unemployment compensation appeal and conducted legal research regarding heirs' property, employment law, and public benefits. Attending an unemployment appeal hearing further demonstrated both the process of representing clients in unemployment cases and how important these benefits are to our clients' day-to-day lives. Reading released Employment Commission decisions prepared me to understand how related case issues were interpreted historically.

In order to further support clients, I have been tasked with providing information about local resources. I created a guide for veterans who are looking to buy a car for the first time in preparation for an event with a local homeless shelter for veterans along with a guide for clients who own homes but need assistance with home repairs. For our clients who are homeowners, encouraging them to take steps to secure generational wealth is key.

Each week, I will also be spending time at the VCU Health Hub, where clients can learn about and create Advance Directives, Powers of Attorney, and Wills. Holding open office hours at the Health Hub enables CVLAS to bring services to clients where it is most convenient for them. In my first visit to the Health Hub, I was able to learn more about the client's goals for their life planning documents and serve as a witness to their will.

**Update 2:** Since starting my internship at Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS), I have had the chance to participate in client meetings, attend a trial, complete legal research and brainstorm new ways to meet clients' needs. The more I interact with clients directly, the more I



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see how the services CVLAS provides are vital. It's always important to have an advocate in your corner, but it becomes even more important when facing life challenges.

I'm so glad to have the opportunity to work with CVLAS and contribute towards their goal of providing free legal services to low-income individuals in civil cases and to help the low income and elderly community through preventive community legal education.

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**Update 3:** I'm excited to share that I recently had the opportunity to represent a client in an unemployment appeal under the supervision of an attorney. While individuals can represent themselves, it is always beneficial for them to be able to have representation, particularly when they are unfamiliar with the systems they are trying to navigate.

Then, while at the VCU Health Hub this week, I met four potential clients. Listening to the stories of those Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS) serves always reminds me how important it is that high quality and free legal services remain available. Often, the office hours made available through the VCU Health Hub stand as the most accessible way to address patients' legal questions, enabling them to get both the health and legal support they need at once.

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**Update 4:** This week is my last week interning with Central Virginia Legal Aid Society (CVLAS). I was able to spend some time in court this week and interacted with clients for both the consumer and heirs' property practice areas. Interacting with clients has been one of my favorite parts of the internship and always serves as a reminder of why public interest work is so important. I have met some of the kindest clients and I've been impressed by the care they show for those around them when they are faced with circumstances outside of their control.

For example, I spoke to a client about a storage unit that was auctioned off prior to the deadline she was given to pay off her balance. She was storing her entire apartment in the unit after a change in living circumstances and now, everything was gone. While she and her daughter were dealing with this extremely stressful situation, she was patient and kind in conversations with me, not only taking the time to explain details of her situation but working to find further documentation.

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**Final Reflection:** I am so grateful for my time at Central Virginia Legal Aid Society and for all the insights it gave me into practicing law in the Richmond area. I look forward to maintaining the relationships that I built this summer. I will now be on the lookout for Health Hubs beyond Richmond, which stood out to me as a wonderful opportunity to meet clients where they are. Without community supports and connections, the work of legal aid becomes less effective. It was wonderful to see how Richmond's many programs can be utilized together to assist clients in need, whether that be in the form of a visit to a Health Hub or free home repairs that enable a



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client to hold on to a home they have inherited. During my time with CVLAS, I gained exposure to consumer law, elder law, and heirs property law, all of which were new to me, so it was a great opportunity to gain hands-on experience across legal aid practice areas. I have had the chance to participate in client meetings, attend a trial, complete legal research and brainstorm new ways to meet clients' needs. The more I interact with clients directly, the more I see how the services CVLAS provides are vital. Having had the chance to represent a client in an unemployment appeal showed me how important even simple conversations with clients can be to ensure both their comfort level and your understanding of the case at hand. Going forward, I know how important client interactions are to me and how much I enjoy spending time in court, both of which are factors I will consider in selecting my next summer position.