



EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

Summer 2026

EJA FELLOWSHIP RECIPIENT

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ORGANIZATION	Legal Aid of West Virginia

Update 1: This summer, I have the incredible opportunity to serve as an Equal Justice America Summer Fellow with Legal Aid of West Virginia in Elkins, WV, and I couldn't be more passionate about the work we're doing.

Every day, I work alongside dedicated attorneys to provide free legal assistance to people who have nowhere else to turn. My work so far has been focused on supporting survivors of abuse and neglect, defending families from wrongful eviction, and fighting for safe and habitable living conditions for those who can't afford to demand them.

I firmly believe that equal access to the law is not optional. It doesn't matter whether you're rich or poor, educated or not. When people can't access the legal system, their rights go unenforced. And if your rights are never enforced, then in any practical sense, you don't really have rights at all. That belief is exactly what brought me to Legal Aid of West Virginia this summer.

Equal Justice America makes this fellowship possible because, like many public interest legal internships, this position is unpaid. Their support allows future lawyers like me to dedicate our summers to public service rather than having to choose between meaningful work and financial survival.

If you believe everyone deserves access to justice regardless of their income, I'd love your support. Even a small donation goes a long way in helping real families in our community.

Thank you so much for your generosity. I'll be sharing updates throughout the summer, so stay tuned!



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Update 2: It has been over a month since beginning my fellowship with #EqualJusticeAmerica with Legal Aid of West Virginia, and it's time for an update on what I'm actually doing all day!

My days involve sitting down with clients to hear their stories and figure out what legal help they need, digging through case law and drafting motions for ongoing cases, and tagging along to court to see how everything I've been working on actually plays out in person.

The cases I'm working on hit close to home for a lot of folks here in West Virginia. Many people are dealing with abuse and neglect, families are facing eviction, tenants just trying to live somewhere safe.

The more I do this work, the more I believe equal access to the law isn't optional. It shouldn't matter if you're rich or poor, educated or not. If you can't access the legal system, your rights don't really get enforced. And rights that aren't enforced aren't really rights at all.

None of this would be possible without Equal Justice America, since legal internships like mine are usually unpaid. If this is something you care about too, I'd really appreciate your support!

Update 3: Big news for #EqualJusticeAmerica fellowship update number three: I was granted a Rule 10 certification by the Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia, which allows me to practice law in a limited capacity under the supervision of a licensed attorney at Legal Aid of West Virginia.

What does that mean in practice? Since receiving it, I've been able to conduct client interviews, walk clients through retainers and waivers, and discuss legal strategy directly with the people we serve under the supervision of a licensed attorney with the clients written consent. I've also drafted and filed petitions and motions with the court. Not just supporting cases from behind the scenes anymore, but actually doing the work.

It's hard to describe how meaningful this has been. Law school teaches you the law, but this summer is teaching me legal practice. I've gained experience with sitting with someone in a difficult moment, explaining their options clearly, and then actually fighting for them. The people I get to fight for are the ones who need it most, including survivors of abuse and neglect, families facing wrongful eviction, and tenants living in unsafe housing.

Every week here strengthens my belief that equal access to the law is everything. Rights that can't be enforced aren't really rights at all.



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This experience is only possible because Equal Justice America funds fellows like me to do this unpaid work.

Update 4: This is my final update from my Equal Justice America Summer Fellowship with Legal Aid of West Virginia. I have had a very interesting and rewarding summer, and I am grateful I was fortunate enough to take on this opportunity.

When I started in Elkins, I wasn't sure what to expect. Since then, I've sat across from people in some of the hardest moments of their lives and helped them understand what options they actually had. I am happy that I was able to assist people in need, while also developing my own professional skills in drafting, research, and negotiation.

I came into this summer believing that equal access to the law matters. I'm leaving it knowing it does. Rights that can't be enforced aren't really rights, and for a lot of West Virginians, legal aid is the only thing standing between having rights on paper and having them in practice.

Huge thanks to the attorneys and staff at Legal Aid for taking a chance on me, and to Equal Justice America for funding fellows like me to do this work.

Thank you for following along all summer.

Final Reflection: My summer was well spent working for Legal Aid of West Virginia in Elkins. My primary goal this summer was to acquire as much hands-on legal training as possible, while also helping people in need. It felt good to be working on something while knowing that you are the "good guy". There was rarely any ambiguity in morality when fighting to get a single parent a protective order from an abusive ex partner.

My employment this summer also let me obtain a Rule 10 certification to practice law under supervision. I was able to do an entire client case from start to finish with my supervising attorney. I had the experience of conducting the client interview, drafting the petitions, motions and orders for that case, answering the clients' questions when they would call into our office with their concerns, arguing before a circuit judge on our clients behalf, and drafting the closing letter for their case. I don't think many of my peers would have had this experience before graduating law school.

My favorite part of my internship was getting to know the people in my office. The Elkins office was pretty small, consisting of only three other people working there. All three of them were some of the kindest, welcoming and competent people that I have had the pleasure of knowing. They were always bringing me into their conversations, whether they be work related or not, and I found myself able to learn from all three of them while also getting to know them



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personally. I have worked for a number of companies over the years, and the vibes in this one were fantastic.

I was surprised at the types of cases that came through our office. I am not from West Virginia, so I do not have the strongest grip on the scope of problems that the people of this state deal with. I expected that the majority would be housing complaints and evictions. While those cases did come through, I learned that there is a terrible amount of domestic violence and child abuse and neglect. I had no idea that these issues were so prevalent, and it was upsetting to learn about this firsthand. What some of these people are going through is heartbreaking, and some of the facts wouldn't be out of place in a movie or television show. Working with these people and doing my best to help them was certainly time well spent.