

Amanda Insalaco
Summer 2018 Reflection for EJA

During the summer of 2018, I was the Equal Justice America Fellow / Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) Intern at LAF (formerly, the Legal Assistance Foundation) in Chicago, Illinois. With five practice groups and 80 attorneys, LAF is Chicago's oldest and largest legal aid organization. LAF serves residents of Cook County.

I worked with the Housing Practice Group (HPG), assisting in eviction and subsidy termination defense. Because LAF does not have sufficient resources to serve all clients in need, it must prioritize the most pressing of cases. The eviction cases accepted by LAF almost always involve a client with a housing subsidy. If a client with a subsidy is evicted, they are also at risk of losing their subsidy. LAF works to secure outcomes that preserve client subsidies. Without subsidies, many families would become homeless or housing insecure.

In addition to direct representation, the Housing Practice Group at LAF engages in impact litigation and advocacy. For example, one of the attorneys at the HPG, is involved with the Chicago Area Fair Housing Alliance (CAFHA), which has a working group on the housing choice voucher (HCV) program and a committee group on enforcement. The group is comprised of a variety of stakeholders, including HCV recipients. It works with LAF to identify gaps in human rights enforcement or concerns with public housing authority (PHA) policies that hinder full mobility for HCV tenants.

I gave a presentation to CAFHA's enforcement committee regarding a housing discrimination article I published. I hope to return to LAF after law school as an Equal Justice Works Fellow (EJW) to work on housing discrimination against HCV holders. LAF would like to bring more affirmative suits to help clients achieve their housing goals in the face of

discrimination and such a Fellowship project would allow us to do so. Thank you for the opportunity to be an EJA Fellow this summer. Without this experience, I would not have been able to forge the relationships necessary to have a strong EJW application this fall.