



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Cory Bernstein

**Law School:** Brooklyn Law School

**Fellowship:** Disability Rights New Jersey

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### Entry 1:

On May 28th, I began my EJA Fellowship with Disability Rights New Jersey. Since starting with DRNJ, I have learned the mandate and goals of the organization, while integrating into DRNJ's legal team. Two weeks ago, I visited a nursing home in Wanaque, New Jersey to observe the treatment conditions and look for areas of concern in the home's quality of care. On Friday, May 31, I had the privilege of attending New Jersey ARC's 30th Annual Conference on Medical Care of Persons With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities. Here, I went to a number of panels and workshops discussing the pressing medical and legal issues regarding health care for intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals.

Last week, I received multiple assignments which will take the duration of the internship, including work with DRNJ's Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) team. Here, I am researching ways in which psychiatric centers deviate from constitutional standards, with the intention of developing legal arguments for the mistreatment of individuals in New Jersey's psychiatric center. This would include a sort of "checklist" advocates could use when visiting these centers so DRNJ can collect empirical data to base their claim.

I am grateful for EJA providing me the opportunity to work with DRNJ this summer!

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### Entry 2:

Over the past three weeks, I have continued my advocacy with Disability Rights New Jersey. I visited psychiatric units throughout New Jersey, observing the conditions, speaking to our involuntarily committed clients, and using this information to continue our research project on a monitoring tool for DRNJ advocates.

Additionally, I have assisted creating free, publicly available resources for New Jersey residents going through the Medicaid appeals process. This will allow those going through a Medicaid appeals process to better understand their rights and the overarching legal procedure.

**Entry 3:**

As I've settled in to my internship at DRNJ, I've undertaken a variety of projects protecting and advocating for New Jersey residents with disabilities and mental illnesses. I presented a memorandum on the procedural and substantive standards for individuals in long-term psychiatric facilities, providing suggestions for ways DRNJ could use its organizational standing to obtain additional information on the treatment of individuals. This research included the different legal statuses of patients, and how these statuses impact their rights as patients. Additionally, I researched potential ADA violations within hospital parking facilities, and helped draft materials allowing individuals to advocate for Medicaid benefits on their own behalf.

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**Entry 4:**

Today, I end my EJA Internship with Disability Rights New Jersey. Over the past two weeks, I observed guardianship proceedings, completed my summer research assignments, and contributed to DRNJ's efforts to integrate its various project teams at staff meetings. This included explaining the scope of the federal PAIMI statute, and how New Jersey statutes and regulations affect PAIMI's application throughout the state.

I am incredibly grateful to EJA and DRNJ for this summer internship experience. I expanded my knowledge of mental health and disability rights law to the regulations of New Jersey!