



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:

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**Law School:** Chicago Kent College of Law

**Fellowship:** Equip for Equality

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### Entry 1: First Few Weeks!

The first few weeks went by very fast! With the week of trainings and taking my first intake call. My first couple of weeks, I had two intake calls that were done in Spanish. I love that Equip for Equality has given me the opportunity to speak Spanish to clients. I mostly deal with Spanish speaking clients, which is very rewarding because a lot of the clients are being taken advantage of for the simple fact that they do not speak English. Equip for Equality does an excellent job by advocating for many Spanish speaking families!

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### Entry 2: IEP Meetings

As a Legal Intern, I have gone to many Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings to discuss the needs of the children. IEP meetings can be very stressful with advocates so it is hard to imagine what an IEP meeting would look like if a parent and student did not have someone in their corner. I was lucky enough to attend many IEP meetings between charter schools in Rockford, IL and CPS IEP meetings. I have learned that no IEP meeting is the same. Some Special Education teachers have no clue what they are doing and some teachers do, but it really is a guessing game as to how an IEP meeting will go. The goal of an IEP meeting is to figure out and implement what is best for the student and many times, that goal gets lost between the hostility among parties. Equip for Equality does an excellent job in advocating for students and parents, specifically when they are at the IEP meetings. They make sure that everything that the student needs is in that IEP and if there is a problem with the IEP that is not resolved during the meeting, mediation is usually the next step!



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### **Entry 3: Advocacy for Parents**

One of the main things that I have learned at Equip for Equality is that a lot of the education issues are stemming from parents not knowing their rights. Equip for Equality provides parents with information on their specific issue allowing parents to advocate for their students effectively. There are times when Equip for Equality does represent families, but most of the families just need information. Equip offers many brochures in English and Spanish that detail families rights. For example, Equip has a brochure on how to approach an IEP meeting and they state what a parent should do if they do not believe in what the IEP states. Equip gives the tools necessary for parents to advocate for their students effectively.

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### **Entry 4: Research on Discipline Rates in Rockford, IL**

Before coming to law school, I was very interested in education equity because as a substitute teacher I was able to see how many students of color were targeted and disciplined more harshly than their white counterparts. I am now researching the discipline rates within the Rockford School District because there are many expulsions and expulsions and abeyances. Equip for Equality wants to see which students are being affected by these expulsions and expulsions and abeyances.