



Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



Name: Molly Huffaker

Law School: Cornell

Fellowship: East Bay Community Law Center

Entry 1: 6/11/2019

Over the past two weeks I have been getting familiar with EBCLC's practices and policies. We have spent a lot of time in trainings, where we have learned not only the ins and outs of the Health and Welfare Clinic but also the basics of the other clinics so that we can be the most effective at serving EBCLC's holistic practice model. My biggest project at the moment is preparing to represent a client at a Social Security disability hearing in July. Currently, this means many hours spent examining medical records, but soon it will mean meeting with my client to prepare them for the hearing and writing a brief to submit to the ALJ pre-hearing. I am excited to be trusted to represent a client for such an important case, but also nervous because whether or not a client receives disability benefits will change their entire life.

I have also worked with clients on smaller matters. Each intern is in charge of intake every day, and on my intake day I began working with a client to appeal a housing issue. I have continued to work with this client for the past several days as this issue has played out, and he has been very grateful for my help, even though things are not currently going his way.

I am looking forward to what the rest of this summer has in store; I anticipate working with many more great clients, and I am excited to learn how to help them through various legal issues in what has so far proven to be an interesting and enriching work environment.

Entry 2: 6/25/2019

It has been a busy two weeks! I have started delving deep into my hearing case, but have also been hard at work with other clients. At times, it has been a struggle to balance everything, but I have enjoyed



being busy and feeling useful. These past few weeks involved the first times I worked face-to-face with clients, which I did in a variety of different settings.

First, my clinic staffed the Name and Gender Change Workshop, which we will continue to do throughout the summer. I worked with a client to get their court ordered name and gender change so that they can change the rest of their documentation. This workshop wasn't particularly on my radar before, so I enjoyed it more than I was expecting. Being able to help a client with something so important and life-changing and being able to do it in one night – unlike much of the work that we do – felt like a really big accomplishment. I know that there are many steps in the process for each client after we are done working with them, but we are at least able to help start that process.

Second, I went to Children's Hospital Oakland to inform patients' families about our work and offer them legal services. I was able to speak to a family who was looking for immigration help, so I performed an intake and passed their information on to our Immigration Clinic. It was nice to be able to provide a service that people were not expecting and that will hopefully significantly improve their lives.

Lastly, I accompanied a client to the Social Security Administration to attempt to get her benefits. This was a very time sensitive issue, and I had never worked with this client or Social Security before, so I was not sure how it was going to go, but fortunately we succeeded and secured her money.

This work is exhausting, so I can see how it is so easy to get burnt out. But it is also so rewarding to have positive client interactions like these, when I really feel like I can use what I have learned to make someone's life better.

Entry 3: 7/9/2019

I am now in full hearing preparation mode - my client's Social Security disability hearing is one week from today, and I am putting the final touches on my brief to submit by midnight tonight. I'll then spend this next week preparing my client and myself as much as possible for the actual hearing on Tuesday. For me, that means going through the record as thoroughly as possible so that I know where everything is and can easily find any evidence that I need or the judge asks for. For my client, that means going over what will happen at the hearing, so that he feels as comfortable and at ease as possible when he is in the hearing room and can testify well. I do think that it is important that I have already built a relationship with my client, so he will hopefully be comfortable answering some of the difficult questions about his disability that I will have to ask him during the hearing.

This feels like the biggest moment where I could really mess something up for a client yet this summer; everything else that I've done has been checked by my supervisor first, but in the hearing room, I will be in charge of what is happening. Luckily, I will be preparing everything with my supervisor first, and she will be there in case she needs to jump in. I know that all I can do is be as prepared as possible, but I also know how important it is for my client to have a successful hearing, and I do not want to do anything to jeopardize that.



Entry 4: 7/23/2019

It's hard to believe that my hearing is over and I only have one more week left at EBCLC! The hearing went well, even though the judge grilled us on certain issues. It felt like my client and I were as prepared as we could have been, which was a relief. I was also relieved to leave the hearing feeling like I did everything I could to both prepare my client for the hearing, so that he didn't feel like anything was thrown at him out of the blue, and to prepare myself, so that I didn't let him down at all during the hearing. My biggest concern was that I would be unprepared and miss something critical, but that thankfully did not happen.

For the next week and a half, I have a lot of work to do to finish up the rest of my work at EBCLC. I have many clients with whom I have also formed relationships over the summer to whom it will be hard to say goodbye. I will be able to close some of their cases before the end of the summer, but some of them I will have to pass back to my supervisor, who will work with them until new students come in the fall. It will be hard to say goodbye to some of them, especially not knowing how their cases will end and not being able to see them through myself.