



Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:

Name: Alexandra Carl

Law School: DePaul University College of Law

Fellowship: LAF

Entry 1: 6/10/2019

Two weeks ago, I started my summer internship at LAF in the Immigrants and Workers' Rights practice group. In addition to finding my way around LAF-- both the organization and the labyrinthine building-- I have had the opportunity to work on several projects already. I have provided research support to my supervisor who is in the process of defending an immigrant who was sexually harassed at work. We are both attempting to redress her workplace sexual harassment through the Chicago Commission on Human Relations, and to address her immigration status by eventually applying for a U visa. I have also contacted clients to arrange for them to come in for interviews regarding their immigration petitions. Additionally, I have researched the rights of pregnant unemployment insurance benefit claimants, drafted immigration petition cover letters, and worked on drafting petitioners' statements. All of the immigrants we work with have been the victims of some type of crime or abuse, and I'm glad that this form of relief exists and is available to them. I'm very grateful for this experience where I can simultaneously learn a great deal and offer support to a legal aid agency working hard to assist those who need civil legal support and wouldn't otherwise be able to obtain it. I am proud to be an @Equal Justice America Fellow, and will follow up this check in on 6/24.

Entry 2: 6/24/2019

I've been at LAF for almost a month now, and it's not LAF anymore! Last week, we hosted a large luncheon to announce our name change to Legal Aid Chicago. More than seven hundred people came, including the governor, and raised over a million dollars for our organization. It was eye-opening to see how many firms, boards, and powerful people support the work that Legal Aid Chicago is doing in various ways. It was also a chance to find out more about what other practice groups within Legal Aid Chicago have been achieving and meet some of the community members that have worked with us to accomplish these successes. Back in the office, I've been working on drafting certification requests, cover letters, and personal statements for clients' U visa and VAWA petitions, as well as collecting all other forms and documents needed for a successful application. I've had a one-on-one meeting with a client to go over her immigration petition, and rescheduled several others. We also participated in mooting an attorney's argument before he presented it at the Seventh



Circuit Court, and then we had the opportunity to go down to the Seventh Circuit and watch the arguments in person. I'm enjoying taking on these challenges and learning by doing. I'm very grateful for this experience where I can simultaneously learn a great deal and offer support to a legal aid agency working hard to assist those who need civil legal support and wouldn't otherwise be able to obtain it. I am proud to be an @Equal Justice America Fellow, and will follow up this check in on 7/8.

Entry 3: 7/10/2019

Things have been pretty wild around here as a lot of the supervisory staff have been offered exciting positions in the new state and city governments. I'm trying to be as helpful as I can while also not making any extra work for anyone. I've been meeting with and conducting interviews with clients for their U visa applications, and then taking the information from these interviews, translating it, and crafting it into statements that will hopefully improve their chances of having their petitions granted. The work has been difficult at times, because all of the clients' experiences are extremely traumatic, and having them pile up truly paints a bleak picture of the world. However, I appreciate that I have the opportunity to help and take some positive action in these cases. In one case, I wrote a letter to a domestic violence court judge, persuading him to sign a form certifying that our client had been the victim of a qualifying crime and had cooperated with law enforcement. We recently received the signed certification, which means that our client's application can proceed. I am currently researching the viability of another client's asylum claim and preparing to interview her to try and determine further how we can best strengthen her case. I appreciate that I've been able to learn about and work in several new areas of law, so I can bring a more holistic set of strengths to bear for every client I encounter in the future. I am proud to be an @Equal Justice America Fellow, and will follow up this check in on 7/22.

Entry 4:

Wow, I have never been accurate on my next update yet. Things have been pretty busy! My supervisor started a new job in the mayor's office as the new director of the Office for New Americans. She'll be doing important work at the city informed by her years of activism and direct service, so this was a success for everyone. Things have been hectic around here as the Immigration and Workers Rights practice group works to find new supervising attorneys. This transitional stage has meant that I've been able to work on several projects that I may not ordinarily have had the chance to explore in more staid times. For example, I had the opportunity to work on my first trafficking case, as well as my first asylum case. While I had a more marginal role in these projects--trying to update older documents, and research, respectively--it's been exciting to get into something new to me. T visas are different from U visas in several ways, and I now feel much more comfortable working on T petitions. It's very difficult for me to absorb information about petitions in the abstract--it's like memorizing the instructions page that comes with a remote control--but working on a real petition tied to real people and



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facts makes it unforgettable for me. I also have been feeling a bit anxious about the large gap in my knowledge when it comes to asylum cases. I've never worked on one or taken an asylum law class or clinic, so I felt entirely clueless. Luckily, I had plenty of time and resources to research, so when I interviewed the client to gain some more insight into her cases's strengths and weaknesses, I was prepared and able to make our conversation a productive use of everyone's time. I had initially thought her case was a certain denial, and it's still a long shot, but it actually has more strengths than were apparent at first. Now I've made the attorney's decision about whether to take it even harder-- I love helping! As my internship at Legal Aid Chicago wraps up, I look forward to celebrating tonight with my fellow interns and the rest of our practice group. I have learned a lot about immigration and about the legal aid field in this job, and I'm proud of the many people that this organization is able to assist. I'm very grateful for this opportunity, which without EJA, I certainly would never have been able to enjoy.