

# Kebkab S. Gelaw

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## EJA Fellowship Report

My EJA Fellowship with ECDC has highly exceeded my initial expectations. The assigned supervisor held an in-depth discussion to understand my area of interest. Having learned that research is one of the areas I highly excel at, I was assigned a task to conduct a research on the right to language access to refugees resettled here in the U.S.

The research included literature review and conducting interviews with ECDC office team members to understand the challenges refugees undergo to gain interpretation/translation services to attain various health and social services. The research uncovered that language access is a major barrier for refugees here in the U.S. to gain access to various services. The following recommendations were therefore passed to enable effective access to language services for refugees.

- The first step is to make a request for an interpreter when a client makes an appointment. If that is not complied with, asking for the administrator and reminding them of their language access responsibilities is the second

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step to take. If service providers fail to abide with this request, a written complaint with U.S. HHS OCR or state government agency if applicable.

- Providing cost effective medical interpreting options
- Training immigrant women to become interpreters
- Creating language access rights cards – there must be a number that is provided to call/send text for an appropriate authority – providing free cards

Having completed the research which took about ten weeks, I also produced brochures for service providers with a view to raise awareness on their legal responsibilities to provide interpretation/translation services. I have also produced a power point presentation which is scheduled to be presented by the 8th of Aug 2019 to ECDC staff members.

In addition, I was also able to attend a training and high-level consultative forum on issues related to the rights of refugees. In my stay with ECDC, I volunteered in support of various events that were organized by ECDC to raise awareness on the rights of refugees. I also undertook door to door advocacy to allow permits for ECDC to use its hall to undertake events for extended hours and were able to exceed expectations by collecting enough signatures.

My experience with ECDC has been enriching, engaging and productive. I have learned various skills to help me excel professionally and academically in the future. I'm very thankful for EJA for making this experience worth-while!