



## Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Tara Carone

**Law School:** University of Loyola Chicago School of Law

**Fellowship:** LAF

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### Entry 1:

This summer, I was honored to be accepted as an Equal Justice America Fellow. EJA is dedicated to providing legal assistance to those who would otherwise be unable to afford it. During my fellowship, I will be working at LAF in Chicago, IL--the largest civil legal assistance foundation in the city. Specifically, I am focusing on child welfare, domestic violence, and education cases. As part of the fellowship, we share four social media posts on our EJA experience.

Today officially marks two full weeks into my fellowship. So far, it has been an amazing learning experience. I will be in charge of an Order of Protection hearing myself in a couple weeks, after doing my first motions in (non-administrative) court last week. I am continuously amazed by the LAF attorney's passion for justice and advocacy for those who would not otherwise have access to legal representation. Discussions about privilege versus poverty and how to advocate in a trauma-informed way are common throughout the workday. I am blessed and excited to continue learning from these individuals over the next eight weeks.

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### Entry 2:

While at Legal Aid Chicago this summer, I was given the opportunity to represent two women in civil Plenary Order of Protection (OP) cases. My responsibilities included probing them for specific details of abuse, accumulating evidence to present in court, conducting the full OP hearing in one and negotiating for a settlement in the other. My supervising attorneys offered both all of the support I needed and the space to take charge of the cases to the fullest extent of my capabilities.

I will always remember the meeting I had to prepare the client to testify in the first OP. It was also our first-time meeting. We spoke for three and a half hours as I asked her to share the specific details of horrendous events in



her life. I sat there hoping I was worthy of it all: of her story, of supporting her through her testimony, and of adequately advocating for her in court.

The adverse party ended up agreeing to settle for everything she asked for. The relief on her face and the hug she gave me is something I will carry with me forever. I was honored to represent these strong women. I would never have been able to do it without an EJA Fellowship.

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### **Entry 3:**

This summer I worked on education law cases at Legal Aid Chicago, fighting against the school-to-prison pipeline: a process through which students are pushed out of schools and into prisons by disciplinary policies and practices within schools that put students into contact with law enforcement. At Legal Aid Chicago, we represented students in expulsion and disciplinary hearings. The students we represent are sexual assault victims, in the foster care system, or both. One way to oppose these expulsions and suspensions is to determine the student has an emotional or intellectual disability at an IEP, or individualized education plan, eligibility meeting. In most of the cases I saw, the reason students were being suspended or expelled was due to reactions caused by the trauma they had faced. They should have been receiving supports and accommodations as is mandated by law, rather than being pushed out of schools. If it weren't for Legal Aid Chicago's advocacy, it is highly likely they would be another number in the school-to-prison pipeline.

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### **Entry 4:**

Now I am officially done with my time at Legal Aid Chicago for the summer. Though I have tried to explain parts of it in these updates, how much I learned was truly tremendous. It was not always easy, but it was endlessly rewarding. Without the support of Equal Justice America, I would not have been able to do this work.