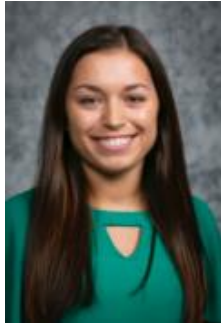




EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

LEGAL SERVICES FELLOWSHIPS

Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



Name: Kelly Leibhan

Law School: University of Wisconsin-Madison

Fellowship: Community Justice, Inc.

Entry 1:



The first two weeks of my internship have been overwhelming, but exciting, and already rewarding! A large chunk of my time has been spent with becoming familiar with our Municipal Defense Project (MDP). MDP connects clients experiencing homelessness, with volunteer attorneys to reduce or eliminate municipal tickets the clients received as a result of homelessness. From doing outreach at local shelters and churches, record requests to receive ticket history, attending “Homeless Court,” and assigning clients to volunteer attorneys, it has been so rewarding to actually speak with and assist these clients in resolving their tickets, which is just one of the many obstacles they face while experiencing homelessness. While doing outreach, many other individuals come to us to discuss

other legal problems they have, and although our project and sometimes our firm cannot handle them, they are still so grateful to even receive a referral to other services throughout the community.

Entry 2:



As a general practice law firm, we handle a lot of family law cases because that's where it seems the greatest need is for our clients. While I never had much exposure to family law before this clerkship, I now realize how great the need is for affordable legal services from family law attorneys. Family law cases can go on for a long time, and the attorney fees can get very high, but these cases determine how much time and say parents will get in their children's lives so they are extremely important issues that are very personal. The clients are always so grateful when we're able to finalize their divorce from an abusive spouse, or win back shared custody of their children. Not



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only are we able to help clients with their family law cases, but so often we see new issues stem from the family law cases like bankruptcies to foreclosures, which we also are able to provide representation for either with reduced rates or completely free.

Entry 3:

I cannot believe how fast the summer has gone by and that I only have a few more weeks left of my summer internship. Although I've only been here for a couple of months I have already seen the attorneys help numerous homeless individuals get pro-bono legal representation for municipal tickets, domestic abuse survivors get legal representation to file restraining orders against their abusers, and family law clients get to keep custody and placement of their children. Although I have seen all the good our attorneys can do, I have also seen huge gaps in services for people who still desperately need them. Many clients continue calling our intake line thinking they need legal representation but really need mental health treatment, social workers, or even AODA treatment. It's hard to have to explain we cannot assist them and we always give them referrals to other social services but there's no guarantee they will. It was probably hard enough for them to reach out to us, and we don't know if the agencies we refer them to will even have the resources to help them. While it's rewarding to be able to provide representation to those living in poverty or close to it, it's important to constantly remember all the other challenges this demographic is facing on a daily basis.

Entry 4:

As the second to last week of my summer internship, this was definitely one of the harder weeks to get through. We spent a large amount of time this week observing a sexual assault trial of a well-known athlete at the city's university. Our supervising attorney was representing a witness in the trial who may have been called by the defense to testify. While I always believe survivors and victims of sexual assault, there was conflicting evidence



and alcohol was involved which created many areas where the victims could not definitively state what had happened which unfortunately I think appeared to the jury as them being untrustworthy, rather than more vulnerable to these types of assaults. In contrast though, I also remember statistics regarding prosecution and sentencing of black defendants. Black defendants often face higher rates of prosecution and harsher punishments when their victims are white. Black defendants are also often sentenced longer than white defendants convicted of the same crime. As someone who has thought about going into criminal law, this trial reminded me of the daily conflicts defense attorneys and prosecutors face on a daily basis regarding victims of sexual assault or other crimes while also trying not to contribute to the mass racial inequality that is all throughout the criminal justice system.