



Summer 2019 EJA Fellow:



Name: Lily Teague

Law School: University of Virginia School of Law

Fellowship: Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland

Entry 1:

The past few weeks I have been learning the ropes for the Family Law department at the Legal Aid Society of Middle Tennessee and the Cumberland. Working with low-income, domestic violence victims has been an eye-opening and moving experience. Often, clients have no prior experience with the legal system, so it is my job to help explain the goals of a particular meeting and lay out for the client how the process will progress. I've supported my supervising attorney by researching various legal issues, assisting with mediation sessions, and helping conduct intake meetings. In these initial intake interviews, I have learned that it is pivotal to balance accurate and thorough fact-gathering with the client's emotions which are often triggered by the discussion. Being attuned to cultural differences is also a skill I find to be important given that a large portion of our clients are immigrants and/or refugees. In just a few weeks I have gained so much knowledge from this invaluable hands-on experience. I am proud to be an Equal Justice America fellow and will follow up in a few weeks with another update.

Entry 2:

At the end of this week I will be over halfway done with my internship - it is amazing how quickly the time is passing! Now that I've learned the ropes of the office, my supervising attorney has been great about giving me increased responsibilities. Last week she let me lead a client intake meeting while she supervised. Definitely felt like my training wheels were off which was a great feeling of accomplishment. I was able to cultivate a relationship with the client and open pathways of communication with her. Another task of mine was to put together packets of educational material to hand out to our clients, helping them know how best to handle their situation. I have packets that are specifically for how to get an Order of Protection, for how to get a divorce, for



couples with children and those with not. The packets also include a composition notebook. The idea behind giving this material is to empower the client by showing them their rights and resources; the notebook is for their personal use to write down any questions and concerns they have about their case. Hopefully, writing things down will help the client process emotions and also help streamline questions and keep a helpful record of information. I'll write again in a few weeks with an update!

Entry 3:

This past week I was able to do a client intake meeting all by myself! My supervising attorney had a scheduling conflict that prohibited her from taking a walk-in client intake, so she asked me to do the meeting. At first, I was incredibly nervous, but I reminded myself that I had previously watched my supervisor do multiple intake meetings. As the meeting progressed, I could feel my confidence increasing, and I felt that I was able to properly assist the client. Later in the week, we were successful in getting the client an extension of her order of protection. It was a rewarding experience to be given the responsibility of meeting with the client on my own. While my supervisor was available if needed, I felt empowered and felt that I was able to make an impact with my work.

Entry 4:

This past weekend I was able to help out at one of Legal Aid's free legal clinics. It was an eye-opening experience and helpful to both my professional as well as my personal development. We had a record number of people attend, made more impressive by the fact that this clinic has only been open for a few months. Already we are able to make a difference in our community by providing people with free legal services. After checking in all the patrons, I had the opportunity to shadow one of the volunteer attorneys. One of her first cases was an Order of Protection Extension case with which she was unfamiliar as her specialty was environmental law. Because of this, she graciously allowed me to lead the interview. It was truly a capstone experience to my summer internship; I was able to apply all the knowledge I have accumulated over these past few months into practice, and it highlighted for me the progress I am making as a law student. It was rewarding to be able to provide the client with a plan to help address her problems. This summer placement at the Legal Aid Society has been transformative for me for how I view our society and our law. I am so thankful for this invaluable experience to work at the Legal Aid Society as an Equal Justice America Fellow.