



**EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA**  
LEGAL SERVICES FELLOWSHIPS

# Post-Graduate Immigration Fellowship: Washington, DC

Quarter 1 Report



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# Kelly Hii EJA Fellow's Journal



It was still dark outside when we pulled into the parking lot. My morning coffee hadn't quite kicked in yet as I stumbled into the small, brightly lit waiting room of a non-profit organization that works with survivors of domestic violence on Maryland's Eastern Shore. As I looked around, I was surprised to see how many people had shown up. The room was filled with women waiting for an immigration consultation. Some made eye contact with us and smiled kindly. Others looked anxious and kept their heads down. They all had suffered greatly and were looking for some relief.

**"WE LISTENED TO SOME HEARTBREAKING STORIES THAT DAY. WE ALSO WITNESSED TREMENDOUS ACTS OF BRAVERY AS ONE BY ONE, THE CLIENTS OPENED UP AND TRUSTED US WITH THEIR PAST."**

In this part of the state, legal immigration representation is hard to come by. Most of the private attorneys that do exist are out of the question for survivors of domestic violence because of the cost. That is why Ayuda teamed up with this local non-profit organization to provide free immigration consultations for 15 of the organization's clients. I had the privilege of assisting with five of these consultations led by an Ayuda attorney.

Needless to say, we listened to some heartbreaking stories that day. We also witnessed tremendous acts of bravery as one by one, the clients opened up and trusted us with their past. I was amazed but not surprised by the resilience demonstrated by these women as they continue to work hard at often difficult jobs to provide for themselves and their families. What was surprising, however, was that most of them actually did have a viable form of immigration relief and did not even know it.

With news coming out almost every day about the termination of different forms of immigration relief, many non-citizens assume that they have no option to remain here legally. Many also believe that they are unable to access basic human necessities, such as affordable food and health care.

These new and complicated changes in law and regulations have not been clearly explained to those whom they affect most, resulting in great fear and despair within parts of the immigrant community. While a lot of these assumptions are well-founded, there are many folks who do have options but have not pursued them due to lack of available and affordable legal representation.

**"IT WAS A POWERFUL EXPERIENCE... TO WATCH THE CLIENT'S EYES LIGHT UP AS THEY CONSIDERED A BRIGHTER FUTURE."**

Many clients we met with during the consultations were surprised that they could in fact continue to receive public benefits and were likely eligible to apply for a visa based on surviving domestic violence. It was a powerful experience for Ayuda attorneys to provide the proper information and watch the client's eyes light up as they considered a brighter future.



Ayuda attorneys at the immigration clinic on Maryland's Eastern Shore

Because there were so many clients, we were only able to meet with each one for about an hour- just enough time to earn the clients' trust, hear about their background, and get enough details to see whether and for what type of case they might qualify for.

Before we left, we made sure we had spoken to each client about their rights and the process for applying for immigration status and responded to all their questions. We promised that we would discuss their case with our team and get back with them soon about the potential for full representation. I was excited to get back to the office to talk through the cases, and even more excited when I was assigned to represent a few of these clients on my own.

Every day I am more and more grateful for the opportunity to be a fellow at Ayuda. For anyone who is not familiar, "ayuda" means "help" in Spanish. While we do help our clients with their immigration matters, I've realized it's more than that. We get to work with our clients to take whatever traumatic and heartbreaking thing that happened to them in the past and use it as a building block for a better future. I am constantly blown away by the positivity, hard work, and gratitude displayed by our clients, despite the all the barriers they face in their daily lives. I am humbled that I've been able to play even just a small part in our clients' journeys towards achieving their fullest potential here in the United States.



**"KELLY HAS BEEN A GREAT ASSET! SHE'S ALREADY MAKING A REALLY MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE IN HER CLIENTS' LIVES AND HELPING AYUDA REACH MORE CLIENTS."**

**JOSH DOHERTY  
MANAGING ATTORNEY, DC IMMIGRATION \*  
AYUDA**



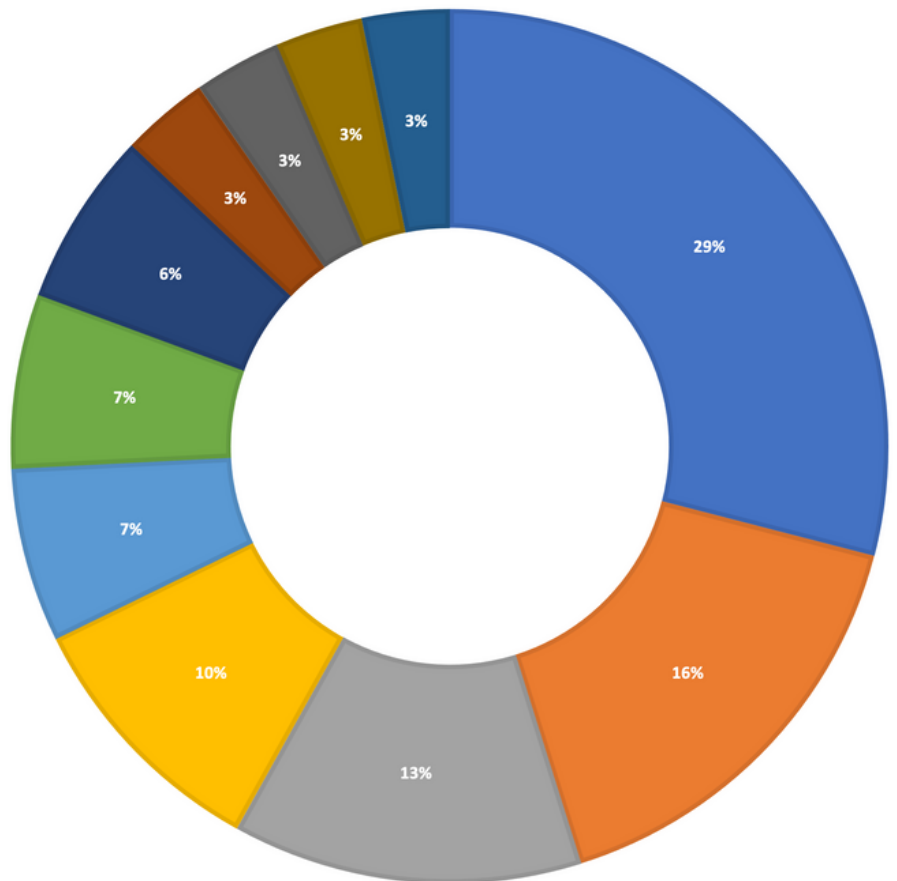
# EJA Fellow's Impact

## Quarter 1 Initiatives

The focus of my work this quarter has primarily been to dive deeper into the ins and outs of immigration law and observe the procedures that Ayuda follows for working on cases.

QUARTER 1 SERVICES PROVIDED BY EJA IMMIGRATION FELLOW KELLY HII

- Notify Clients of Changes in Law that May Affect Their Cases
- Consultations with Survivors of Domestic Violence
- Adjustment of Status Applications
- DACA Renewal Applications
- Family-based Petitions
- Special Immigrant Juvenile Status Petitions
- Employment Authorization Document Applications
- Request for Evidence Response
- Fee Waiver Request
- Brief Consultation
- FOIA request and FBI Background Check Request



# Quarter 1

## Services Provided

### **Family-based petitions = 2**

- Observed initial consultation with clients
- Met one on one with the clients to go over contract for legal services
- Completed I-130 application with clients
- Submitted applications to USCIS, which are currently pending

### **DACA Renewal applications = 3**

- Observed initial consultation with the clients
- Met with clients to fill out applications
- Mailed 2 of the applications to USCIS, which have been approved

### **Special Immigrant Juvenile Status petitions = 2**

- Observed initial consultation with one of the clients
- Filled out I-360 applications for both clients
- Assembled supporting documents for both applications
- Observed one master calendar hearing for one of the clients
- Submitted one of the applications to USCIS, which is currently pending

### **Employment Authorization Document applications = 2**

- Observed initial consult with one client
- Filled out I-765 applications for two clients
- Assembled supporting documents for one client
- Submitted one application to USCIS, which is currently pending

### **Request for Evidence response = 1**

- Gathered requested documentation from medical clinic, court, and police records office
- Assembled documents with cover letter and client declaration and mailed to USCIS
- Response is pending

### **Adjustment of Status applications = 4**

- Observed initial consultation with clients
- Met with clients to go over contract for legal services
- Filled out I-485 applications with all clients
- Sorted and organized clients' supporting documents from the past three years to prove continuous physical presence over that time
- Assembled application with supporting documents, cover letter, and client declaration
- Applications are almost complete, just waiting on medical examinations from all clients

### **Fee waiver request = 1**

- Filed fee waiver request in DC Superior Court
- Went before judge to argue in support of the fee waiver request
- Fee waiver was granted

### **Brief consultation = 1**

- Met with client to go over the timeline of his case and what to expect next

### **FOIA request and FBI background check request = 1**

- Observed consult with client
- Went over contract for legal services with client
- Completed forms and cover letters for USCIS and EOIR FOIAs
- Submitted client's fingerprints for FBI background check, received and analyzed results

### **Calls to notify clients of change in law that may affect their cases = 9**

- Familiarized myself with cases
- Called clients to inform of new law and options

### **Consultations with survivors of domestic violence = 5**

- Observed consultations
- Provided feedback and suggestions

**Total Clients Supported: 31**

# Quarter 1 Achievements

1. Submitted 2 successful DACA renewal applications. The clients can now stay and work in the United States for another two years.
2. Kept the clients informed about the status of their cases, notifying them as soon as there are any updates. Many clients have expressed gratitude at being called and informed.
3. Submitted two family-based petitions in a timely manner to minimize the time the family members are on the waitlist due to extensive processing delays.
4. Completed four adjustment of status applications for victims of crimes so that they can have a more stable and secure immigration status.

## Quarter 2 Goals

- 1.) Work on a U-visa application
- 2.) Work on a T visa and/or VAWA application
- 3.) Observe attorneys in court and interviews