



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Olivia Kappers

Law School: DePaul University College of Law

Organization: Legal Aid Chicago

Entry 1: June 15, 2020

As most of you may know, I am a rising second year (2L) law student at DePaul University College of Law. This summer I have the privilege of interning at Legal Aid Chicago in the Children and Family Practice Group as an Equal Justice America Summer Fellow. As a part of my fellowship, I will be posting updates about my experience as a law student providing free legal assistance.

For more than 50 years, Legal Aid Chicago has been committed to providing free legal services to people living in poverty in Cook County. Recent court closures due to Covid-19 have presented challenges for vulnerable communities to access the court system and obtain legal representation. In my first few weeks at LAC, I have drafted emergency motions, communicated with clients, and attended court hearings via Zoom.

Equal justice under law starts with equal access to the law, and I am grateful for this opportunity to advocate for equality in the justice system during these unprecedented times.

Please consider donating to Equal Justice America to help support future summer fellowships.

Entry 2: July 9, 2020

Here's another update about my summer internship at Legal Aid Chicago in the Children and Families Practice Group.

So far, I have been working in different areas of family law including divorce, orders of protection, and domestic violence. In addition to drafting motions, subpoenas, and other pleadings, I have been researching family law issues and analyzing relevant case law, specifically in the Illinois First District Appellate Court. Just as families are diverse and complicated, family law cases are multifaceted by nature which makes research challenging and constantly evolving.



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The most fulfilling part of my internship has been assisting with client intake and case management. Interacting with clients has demonstrated the real impact that Legal Aid Chicago has in increasing access to the justice system for Chicagoans living in poverty, especially in adapting to the unique challenges that Covid-19 has brought with court closures.

Please consider donating to Equal Justice America so that law students can continue pursuing public interest work.

Entry 3: July 31, 2020

I've been interning this summer with Legal Aid Chicago in the Children and Families Practice Group for more than two months. Last week I had the opportunity to conduct an intake appointment for a potential client entirely on my own, without my supervising attorney's observation. This process has given me an appreciation for the importance that a comprehensive case intake has on establishing a strong foundation for the success of the case. I was able to also practice my public speaking skills in presenting my summary of the case intake during our weekly meeting in front of the practice group's attorneys and the other interns. I am grateful that my internship at LAC has included valuable client interaction despite challenges from Covid-19 and working remotely.

Entry 4: August 14, 2020

I've been interning for more than two months with Legal Aid Chicago in the Children and Families Practice Group. In my final week at LAC, I was invited by the attorneys and interns working at Legal Aid Chicago's Juvenile Expungement Help Desk to observe juvenile records expungement court proceedings. The Juvenile Expungement Help Desk assists clients with clearing records for arrests that occurred before age 18 in Cook County. Record expungement helps remove barriers to employment and housing requiring background checks, and also provides significant emotional relief to those charged as young adults. I am excited to announce that I will be volunteering with the Juvenile Expungement Help Desk this fall.

I am extremely thankful to have had the opportunity to intern at Legal Aid Chicago this summer with the assistance provided by EJA. This experience has strengthened my commitment to family law and juvenile justice and has taught me invaluable skills and lessons through hands-on public interest legal work which will continue to serve me in my future legal career.

Please consider supporting Equal Justice America.