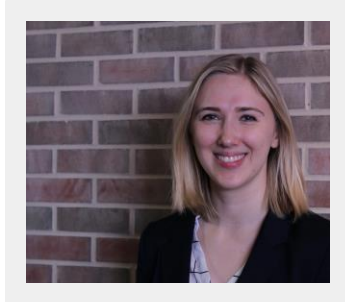




Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name:

Jordan Chrispell

Law School:

Michigan State University College of Law

Organization:

Legal Services of South Central Michigan

Entry 1: Week of June 15th

As you may know, I was selected as an Equal Justice America Fellow for my summer internship with Legal Services of South Central Michigan. So far, I have completed five weeks of my internship focusing mainly on family law cases. This internship has further fueled my passion in public interest law. I also made sure to enroll in family law classes next year! I am amazed at how resilient our clients are. Some of our clients have experienced extreme trauma and abuse, yet they are still positive and trust their LSSCM attorneys to win the best outcome for them.

Entry 2: Week of July 6th

The general takeaway from these past few weeks at my clerkship... take time to help others.

In law school, much of our education is centered around learning legal theory rather than learning how to practice law. So, I asked my supervising attorney for work drafting motions, subpoenas, orders, and client letters. I know it would be faster for her to just draft her own work, rather than have me draft something she later has to edit. However, she is never bothered with the extra time this process takes. She is willing to edit my work and even meet with me to talk through the changes she made. I am thankful for her support and mentorship in improving my legal writing skills!

This week I spent some time assisting clients with non-legal issues (such as getting potholes filled). Attorneys, especially in legal aid, often have the ability resolve and issue that has frustrated their client for months with minimal effort. In the pothole example, I was able to resolve the client's problem with a quick Google search.

Entry 3: Week of July 27th

As you may know, the Eviction Moratorium lifted in Michigan a few weeks ago. Since then, LSSCM's Eviction Diversion Program has had an unprecedented number of tenants requiring our help to avoid eviction for nonpayment of rent.



However, legally, there is not much we can do to help tenants other than buy them some extra time to pay their back rent.

On top of this, people are struggling to maintain the same level of pre-pandemic employment, facing hurdles applying for and receiving unemployment benefits, are no longer receiving federal unemployment benefits, and are sometimes unable to get financial assistance from overwhelmed nonprofits.

We are facing a disaster. A completely foreseeable, and likely preventable, disaster. I feel helpless. Our clients feel helpless.

Entry 4: Week of August 10th

During the middle of a pandemic, I feel incredibly lucky to have had a summer internship experience in the legal field. The attorneys and staff at LSSCM have been wonderful to work with and learn from. I appreciate their fierce advocacy and commitment to change in the legal system.

I am proud of the work I have accomplished this summer, such as: writing a motion and subsequent order that was signed by a judge, appearing virtually in court for our Eviction Diversion Programs, and developing trusting relationships with clients.

Fortunately, I will still be working at Legal Services this Fall. I hope to continue to develop my legal practice skills and increase my knowledge of housing and family law.