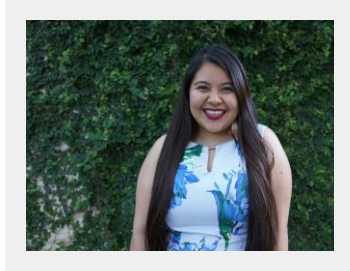




## Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Elizabeth Pliego

**Law School:** St. Mary's University School of Law

**Organization:** Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

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### Week of June 15th

As I wrapped up my first year of law school (yay!) I have also recently been selected as one of this year's Equal Justice America summer fellows! I am very excited for this opportunity as I am currently a law clerk for Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, which provides free legal aid services for people who cannot afford an attorney in 68 southwestern Texas counties. Through EJA and TRLA I have been given mentorship and experience I would not have been able to receive through law school alone. In the past couple of weeks, working remotely, I have been on the education/special education team in San Antonio! Along with the education team I have been able to aid clients through research, translations, and memos. My ability to speak Spanish and translate legal documents for Spanish-speaking clients has allowed me to aid parents of children who would otherwise struggle to receive the same opportunity to be able to read important information. I have also been working with young clients with individual differences who are not getting the educational services they have a right to, even amidst the pandemic. These are a few of the several cases that I have had the opportunity to help advocate for. TRLA has helped me see that it takes more than analyzing laws to help a client, one must also learn how to become an effective voice for the voiceless.

Al terminar mi primer año de la escuela de leyes (¡sí!) ¡También he sido seleccionada como una de las becadas del verano de Equal Justice America de este año! Estoy muy emocionado por esta oportunidad, ya que soy asistente legal de Texas RioGrande Legal Aid, que proporciona servicios de asistencia legal gratuitos para personas que no pueden pagar por un abogado en 68 condados del suroeste de Texas. A través de EJA y TRLA me han brindado apoyo y experiencia que no habría podido recibir solo a través de la facultad de derecho. ¡En las últimas semanas, trabajando de forma remota, he estado en el equipo de educación / educación especial de San Antonio! Junto con el equipo educativo, he podido ayudar a los clientes a través de investigaciones, traducciones y notas. Mi habilidad para hablar español y traducir documentos legales para clientes que hablan español me ha permitido ayudar a los padres de niños que de otro modo tendrían dificultades para recibir la misma oportunidad de poder leer la información importante. También he estado trabajando con clientes jóvenes con diferencias individuales que no reciben los servicios educativos a los que tienen derecho, inclusive en medio de la pandemia. Estos son



algunos de los varios casos que he tenido la oportunidad de ayudar a defender. TRLA me ha ayudado a ver que se necesita más que analizar leyes para ayudar a un cliente, también se debe aprender cómo convertirse en una voz efectiva para los que no tienen voz.

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## **Week of July 6th**

Grateful for [Equal Justice America](#) funding this summer as I am able to work with the best education/special education team. The best part thus far was when two team members successfully got a client out of guardianship and regained their rights!

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## **Week of July 27th**

The team and my supervisor have been the most thoughtful, caring, and understanding attorneys. They have shown me lawyers can care, be empathic, and most importantly actually listen to their clients needs. Recently, through hours of research, I have aided the team in a complaint and helped gather resources for teachers regarding school openings. The work has been so rewarding and I look forward to continue public interest work in the future because all persons deserve to have access to legal representation regardless of income. If you are able to help future public interest law students like me, please consider donating to EJA.

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## **Week of August 10th**

I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to work alongside the Special Education/Education Team with Texas RioGrande Legal Aid while being a fellow for Equal Justice America! This summer has been full of projects that have enabled me to put my talents towards research for the team to put together complaints, press releases, and case filings. Remote work has definitely been challenging as I was unable to meet clients face to face, but through zoom and conference calls, I hope to have portrayed the same amount of empathy in the best possible way. I did not personally think I could get this far as a first generation law student but I am here to continue to defy the statistics and to hopefully encourage others to strive for their goals because they are possible with hard work and lots of self care.

Estoy muy agradecida por la oportunidad de trabajar junto al Equipo de Educación Especial / Educación con Texas RioGrande Legal Aid mientras era miembro de Equal Justice America! Este verano ha estado lleno de proyectos que me han permitido poner mi talento en estudios para que el equipo reúna quejas, comunicados de prensa y archivos de casos. El trabajo remoto definitivamente ha sido un desafío ya que no pude reunirme con los clientes cara a cara, pero a través del zoom y las conferencias telefónicas, espero haber mostrado la misma cantidad de empatía de la mejor manera posible. Personalmente, no pensé que podría llegar tan lejos como estudiante de derecho de primera generación, pero estoy aquí para continuar desafiando las estadísticas y, con suerte, para alentar a otros a esforzarse para alcanzar sus metas porque son posibles con trabajo duro y mucho cuidado personal!