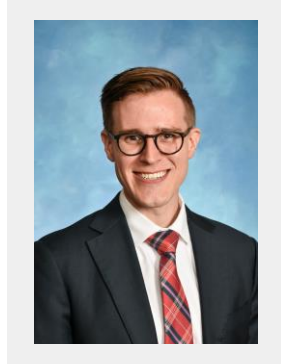




Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Matthew Miller

Law School: Temple University

Organization: Philadelphia Legal Assistance

Week of June 15th

When I was offered an internship with Philadelphia Legal Assistance's Unemployment Compensation unit, I had no idea that by the time I would start nearly two million Pennsylvanians would have lost their jobs. Since joining PLA, I have been fortunate to learn from a team that works tirelessly to meet the great need in this moment, and to spend my days working to help Philadelphians access benefits that are a critical lifeline in these unprecedented times. I'm also fortunate to be an Equal Justice America Fellow, and their work to ensure a more fair and equitable legal system is most important in trying times like these. If you can support their work to ensure legal representation for all, please donate.

Week of July 6th

Over the eight weeks I've worked at Philadelphia Legal Assistance, I've had the opportunity to represent clients at unemployment compensation hearings, and to work with others as they attempt to navigate the often frustrating reality of applying for unemployment benefits. It's clear how important it is for applicants to have access to legal representation in proceedings where the stakes are so high, and the ability to support yourself or your family hangs in the balance. I'm grateful to have had the chance to learn from the great team at PLA, and to have had the support of Equal Justice America. I said this before, but as we head into the fall it seems like the need for civil legal services is only going to increase – if you can support their work to ensure that everyone, regardless of income, can exercise their right to be represented, please donate.



Week of July 27th

One thing that has become clear to me while working in PLA's Unemployment Compensation Unit during the COVID-19 crisis is how critical unemployment benefits are to ensuring people can keep themselves and their families safe. As businesses in Pennsylvania reopened, even while case counts never hit zero, workers faced the prospect of returning to places of employment that could put themselves and their families at risk. Without unemployment, these workers would either have to return to an unsafe workplace or lose their ability to support themselves. This reality underscores the necessity of legal services for the low-income workers most exposed to the pandemic. Workers need to know their rights and have access to the resources they need to exercise them.

Week of August 10th

Having spent the summer interning at Philadelphia Legal Assistance, I've come away from the experience with an even greater appreciation for the importance of non-profit civil legal services. The attorneys and staff at PLA's Unemployment Compensation Unit have spent the past few months not only providing invaluable representation to those most in need, but also providing critical input about the experiences of clients directly to the Department that implements the program. I have been fortunate to learn how to be an effective advocate both on behalf of individual clients and on behalf of all those who seek government benefits. I've come away from this experience convinced that advocacy is an essential part of ensuring that both substantive and procedural rights are respected, and even more committed to pursuing a career in public interest law.