



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Rachel Pollak

Law School: University of Illinois College of Law

Organization: Legal Aid Chicago

Entry 1:

Hi everyone! As you may know, I have just finished my first year of law school at [University of Illinois College of Law](#). I have been generously selected as one of this year's [Equal Justice America](#) Fellows - here is my first [EJA Fellow Update](#). This summer, as an EJA Fellow, I am working at Legal Aid Chicago. Legal Aid Chicago provides free civil legal services to people living in poverty in Cook County, IL. I am interning on the Education Law team within the Children and Families Practice Group. As an intern on the Ed Law team, I work with attorneys who represent students, mostly in Chicago, who are involved with DCFS and need legal representation to navigate the special education process. The goal is to ensure all of these students are receiving a free and appropriate education. We also represent students in matters of school discipline, like in suspension and expulsion hearings. Over the past 3 weeks I have learned a lot - about the special education process and about how legal aid organizations operate and make an impact. It took a little while to get used to doing this all over the internet (my placement is remote), but the people I am working with have been incredibly kind and welcoming, and I'm learning so much from them!

Entry 2:

Time for my second [EJA Fellow Update](#) as an [Equal Justice America](#) fellow! July has been less busy than June so far because school is out for summer, and IEP meetings have slowed down until the fall. However, remote learning continues for some, and it is critical that students are being provided the services they need to receive a free appropriate education. Many students who require specialized services have been severely impacted by the school closures brought on by Covid-19. There is still lots of work to be done, and I'm excited to keep doing it!

Entry 3:

It seemed like things were slowing down at the beginning of the month, but I've been busy. July has mostly consisted of legal research and document drafting - dissent letters, FOIA requests, Due Process complaints, you name it! It is hard to believe how quickly the summer is passing by. I continue to be extremely grateful for my experience as an [Equal Justice America](#) fellow.

Entry 4:

It's hard to believe my time as an [Equal Justice America](#) fellow has come to an end. For my final [EJA Fellow Update](#) I would like to express my gratitude to both EJA and Legal Aid Chicago for providing me with an enriching experience. I can't think of a better way to have spent my summer. There is nothing more fulfilling to me than working to make sure children have the resources they need to live up to their potential. And, it is not surprising that children facing barriers to equity in education are disproportionately affected by Covid-19. During this time, I am acutely aware of how important the work of organizations like Legal Aid Chicago is in ensuring that students' voices are heard and that their needs are recognized.