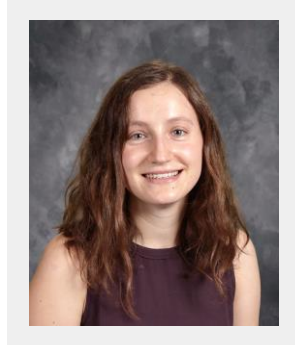




Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Emma Fichtel

Law School: University of Texas School of Law

Organization: Equal Justice Center

Week of June 15th:

The first three weeks of my legal internship at the Equal Justice Center have flown by. Equal Justice Center is a public interest law firm that fights for employment justice for low-income workers regardless of their immigration status and has offices in Austin, San Antonio, Dallas, and Houston. However, at the moment it's one big, virtual office. After a week of employment law orientation, a fellow legal intern and I were partnered up and assigned an array of cases to assist on, ranging from wage disputes to discrimination in the workplace. The current pandemic has only made the work the EJC is doing even more crucial and I am excited to be helping to further their mission.

Week of July 6th:

I can't believe I'm already on week six of my internship at the Equal Justice Center! My fellow legal intern partner and I have been helping with five cases and one case we've been assigned is a collective action, a type of lawsuit that I had never learned about before. Collective actions are available under the Fair Labor Standards Act, a federal law that provides standards for minimum wage and overtime pay. Collective actions are similar to class actions in that they both aggregate claims but in class actions people are automatically opted in, whereas in collective actions people have to affirmatively decide to opt in. Unfortunately, this can sometimes make it more difficult for workers to join collective actions and fight for their rights. It has been awesome working at the Equal Justice Center on this case and helping people to fight for their workplace rights!

I've been fortunate to receive support for my work this summer from both The University of Texas School of Law and Equal Justice America, an organization that provides legal service fellowships to law students across the country.



Week of July 27th:

With my internship at the Equal Justice Center drawing to a close (one week left!), my legal intern partner and I are starting to wrap up the projects and assignments we've been given. As I look back on what we've done this summer and how far our cases have come, I'm proud of the work we've done but also frustrated on our clients' behalf. The legal system is disappointingly slow and defendants can use that to their advantage to try to draw out cases until plaintiffs have run out of time, funds, and energy. I hope that all the cases we've been helping with will be resolved in favor of our clients but I'm not optimistic about when that might happen. It can be months or even years before plaintiffs are able to resolve their cases. Without nonprofits like the Equal Justice Center helping to fight these legal battles, many workers would be unable to pursue justice on their own.

Week of August 10th:

My internship at the Equal Justice Center is all wrapped up! I had such a valuable summer experience and am so grateful for all that I learned. The Equal Justice Center is an amazing organization doing really inspiring work and I'm glad to have been a part of that work this summer.

I was fortunate to receive support for my work this summer from both The University of Texas School of Law and Equal Justice America, an organization that provides legal service fellowships to law students across the country. If you would like to support Equal Justice America and help fund law students working in legal aid organizations nationwide, you can do so at equaljusticeamerica.org.