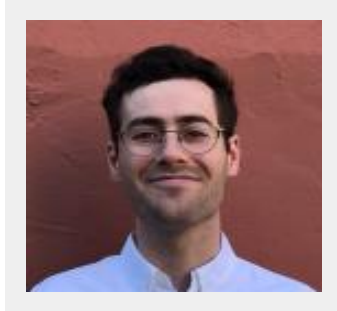




Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Sean Anderson

Law School: UCLA School of Law

Organization: East Bay Community
Law Center

Week of June 15th

I'm officially in the midst of my fourth week as a Law Student Intern at the Housing Unit of the East Bay Community Law Center, and it's time for my EJA Fellow Update. The first few weeks of my program have introduced me to an array of issues that regularly come up in unlawful detainer actions, plus some novel issues that have arisen as a direct result of COVID-19 and the responsive eviction moratoriums. I have spent much of my time answering calls and speaking with tenants directly to help provide legal insight to their situations. Since all of us in Alameda County are still sheltering in place, it is arguably more essential than ever that the needs and rights of tenants are being provided for, and these phone sessions with tenants help to advance this goal.

Furthermore, while unlawful detainer proceedings have been temporarily halted, our team expects landlords to issue a flood of attempted evictions once the state of emergency is lifted and courts get the green light to hear these actions. To that end, I have spent much of my time learning about the state, judicial, regional, and municipal emergency ordinances to prepare myself for potential issues and available defenses when defending tenants. I have enjoyed equipping myself with the requisite knowledge to advocate on the behalf of tenants at this unprecedented time of novel legal developments.

Despite the remote environment, this has been an extremely rewarding experience and I look forward to my further professional and educational growth this summer. Above all, I look forward to hopefully becoming a valuable asset in defending tenants and securing their housing at this critical juncture for the health and well-being of our community.



Week of July 6th

It's time for my second EJA Fellow Update! Since my last update, my work at the Housing Unit of the East Bay Community Law Center has only gotten more involved, engaging, and inspiring.

Although Bay Area courts are still closed off to unlawful detainer actions, I have been able to become involved with substantive work representing clients facing evictions. Some of my clients are facing attempted evictions due to alleged nonpayment of rent prior to local emergency COVID-19 ordinances. While the courts have temporarily halted these legal proceedings, these tenants are still experiencing very real anxieties and stresses in response to their attempted evictions, and these concerns are compounded by the obvious stresses of the current pandemic. In this sense, much of my responsibilities have consisted of assuring clients that they are protected from being evicted as long as local eviction moratoriums are in place; working with their landlords' attorneys to resolve disputes and halt evictions; and studying applicable ordinances to ensure that all necessary tenant protections are in place.

In addition to representing clients, we have expanded our drop-in informational services to non-clients. Although we only accept clients who have already received an unlawful detainer complaint and summons, we offer informational services to local tenants who are dealing with a wide variety of rent payment, habitability, and housing concerns. Although these informational sessions now take place over the phone, rather than the typical in-person process, I have been able to improve my client interaction and communication skills, as well as my ability to identify, interview, and respond to legal issues as they come up in the conversation. This experience has been invaluable to my professional development and will undoubtedly serve me for years to come, both in my legal education through participation in clinics and in my legal career beyond graduation.

Week of July 27th

It's time for my third EJA Fellow Update! In fact, today marks the last day of my summer internship at the Housing Unit of the East Bay Community Law Center.

This was an engaging and inspiring summer. In February, when I committed to joining EBCLC as a Summer Intern, I was particularly looking forward to the in-person weeknight tenant workshops and making actual court appearances on behalf of clients. While these in-person activities did not happen for obvious reasons, I am impressed by how effectively EBCLC was able to adapt to a remote experience. In fact, the remote program, coupled with the eviction moratoriums, created a program that offered broader exposure to housing issues than I previously anticipated. Because we did not encounter the normal flow of evictions this summer, we were able to expand our efforts to advocating for tenants before they even receive a notice to terminate the lease. These expanded efforts, just in the past week, included advocating for relocation benefits, requesting



reasonable accommodations, and attempting to compromise on a pay and stay agreement. My involvement in this wide variety of housing issues that don't necessarily reach the severity of evictions might not have been possible in a pre- or post-eviction moratorium world, but I was nonetheless able to provide tangible benefits to tenants in very difficult and precarious situations.

Overall, my summer experience truly taught me the power and importance of public interest lawyers who work to advance social justice. Public interest lawyers are uniquely positioned to chip away at, and hopefully ultimately dismantle, systems of oppression that are deeply entrenched in our society. My experience advocating for tenants in the Bay Area this summer provided me with real-world experience in using my skills and knowledge as a lawyer in training to pursue and advance justice for my clients.

Week of August 10th

I have no new updates for my final EJA Fellow Update. My final week of my internship was the week of my most recent update. Overall, I had a wonderful and enlightening summer advocating for low-income tenants, and it was in part made possible by Equal Justice America's generous funding. Thank you for all that your organization does to help advance client-centered lawyering that prioritizes the public interest.