



Summer 2020 EJA Fellow:



Name: Fatima Abdelsalam

Law School: Rutgers Law School

Organization: Volunteer Lawyers for Justice

Week of June 15th

I have been interning with Volunteer Lawyers for Justice for 2 weeks now and it has been an exciting and fulfilling experience. I am working on the Human Trafficking, Tenancy, and Divorce teams. I am been especially surprised at how much I have enjoyed working on the divorce team, as the word "divorce" usually has a negative connotation. Many of our clients have been separated from their spouses for years and usually there's a small hurdle, whether financial, administrative, or legal preventing them from simply attaining it. I've helped a few clients fill out pro se petitions and it has been a blessing to be in a position to help them with the process - so that they can peacefully move on from their lives. The other two departments have not gained as much traction since the courts are still closed, but overall it has been a very rewarding experience!

Week of July 6th

I have been with Volunteer Lawyers for Justice for a month now, working on their Tenancy, Divorce, and Human Trafficking programs. I have had the opportunity to do intakes, assist clients with filing their complaints, submit them online to the Courts, and research difficult issues, namely within the tenancy program. Working remotely certainly has its challenges, but it has been truly rewarding to be able to advocate for clients in any capacity. It is hard to believe that I am halfway through my internship and as rising 2L at Rutgers Law School, I am excited to see what the rest of the summer holds!



Week of July 27th

My experience at VLJ is coming to an end next week and I've learned so much! We just recently stopped doing divorce intakes as we prepare to for the influx of tenancy intakes that'll mostly likely need to do be conducted when the housing crisis intensifies. I completed a memo on a tenant-landlord issue and I'm currently finishing up a memo on the default judgment procedure in New Jersey. Looking forward to sharing more in the next update!

Week of August 10th

It was surely an exciting and fulfilling experience this summer! I got to work on the Human Trafficking, Tenancy, and Divorce teams, with the divorce team becoming my favorite program by far. I had the opportunity to assist dozens of clients complete pro se petitions and submit documents to the Judiciary Electronic Document Submission system (JEDS). It was a blessing to be in a position to help clients with the process so that they could peacefully move forward with their lives. The other two departments did not gain as much traction since the courts remained closed, however, I was still able to do substantial legal work through research, intakes, and memo writing.

We stopped doing divorce intakes towards the end of my internship and shifted our focus on the imminent influx of tenancy intakes that needed to be conducted as the housing crisis intensified. I completed a memo on a tenant-landlord issue, which not only was educational on my end, but allowed me to refine my legal writing skills. My final work product included a memo on the default judgment procedure in New Jersey, which I have come to learn is very complicated.

Working remotely during a global pandemic certainly had its challenges but it was truly rewarding to be able to advocate for clients in any capacity. Being an Equal Justice Fellow has allowed me to make my goals of becoming a human rights attorney a reality.