



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



Name: Elizabeth June

Law School: American University Washington College of Law

Organization: DC Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities

Update 1:

This summer, I have the privilege of serving as an Equal Justice America Fellow while interning at DC Quality Trust for Individuals with disabilities. Quality Trust works to create change in lives of people with developmental disabilities. Quality Trust partners with both individuals with disabilities and their families to help people succeed and experience full membership in the community of their choice. As a legal intern, I am learning how to communicate with people of all backgrounds. I have also learned about many alternatives to guardianship. There are less restrictive options than guardianship that advance the right to make choices. These options include Supported Decision-Making, Powers of Attorney, and Advance Directives. Issues surrounding guardianship and the right to choice have been particularly eye opening and I am learning a lot about advocating for the rights of each client.

Update 2:

In the past two weeks since my last Equal Justice America Update, issues surrounding conservatorship and guardianship have been in the spotlight because of Britney Spears. Britney Spears' situation is just an example of what many individuals face in their own lives. Issues about restrictive guardianship and conservatorship are not new. Guardianship is restrictive because it authorizes a third person to make personal and important decision. These decisions can relate to things like reproductive rights, voting rights, and who an individual associates with. Supported Decision-Making allows an individual to make their own decisions with support that allows them to both understand their options and communicate their choices. At Quality-Trust I have been working on a variety of issues while promoting the option of Supported Decision-Making.



Update 3:

During my summer interning with Quality Trust, there has been a lot of discussion of Supported Decision-Making. I have learned a lot about this less restrictive legal option. Supported Decision-Making allows an individual to make decisions, manage matters, and handle money. It creates additional supports through the use of supporters. Supported Decision-Making can be formal or informal. D.C. law recognizes an individual's right to enter into one or more Supported Decision-Making Agreements. It is important that these less restrictive tools are known so that individuals are aware of these options to promote individuals' rights.

Entry 4:

This summer interning with DC Quality Trust for Individuals with Disabilities has taught me so much about working in the public interest sphere. Throughout this summer, I was able to dive into the disability rights legal world. I learned about the alternatives to guardianship and conservatorships while developing my legal skills. Quality Trust works to provide supports and services to individuals with disabilities involving issues around capacity, consent, and the right to self-determination. Through my internship, I was able to learn more about how Quality Trust fulfills this mission. I was able to attend client meetings, research relevant issues, and dive into complex issues related to disability rights. This summer showed me the power the law has and the huge impacts it can have on an individual's daily life. It has inspired me to continue to use my legal career to advocate for and protect individuals' rights.