



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Gabrielle Pilgrim

**Law School:** Chicago-Kent College of Law

**Organization:** Legal Aid Chicago

---

**Update 1:** I have the pleasure of working at Legal Aid Chicago in the Public Benefits Project Group. Thus far, most of my work relates to gathering information from clients to help them attain benefits; contacting hospitals for medical records and indexing those records; and contacting social security offices to update records. I am a liaison between client, hospital, and social security office. I can help my clients by actively listening and solving problems as they arise. I am learning to be patient with phone lines on hold and using creativity to solve issues. My supervisor and my team are very helpful when I have questions, but the nature of working remotely has spawned my own independent search for solutions. Overall, I am pleased with my first couple weeks and looking forward to helping my clients attain the help they need! Thank you Equal Justice America for working alongside me in this journey.

---

**Update 2:** I got to go into the office for the first time! I met with a client. After a year(plus) of pandemic life, it was refreshing to sit down and meet with a client face-to-face. I value the opportunity to connect virtually, but there is something special about sitting in the presence of another person, and working together to find a solution. It also expedited the process of signing and submitting forms. Additionally, it allowed me to connect with my supervisor and get a few questions answered. I am working virtually, but looking forward to the next opportunity to go into the office and meet with another client. The summer is off to a great start!

---

**Update 3:** This week, I am leading a hearing for a client that I have been working with for the past month. I am excited that my supervising attorney is letting me take the lead! We are working on several cases to assure that our clients receive AABD Cash from the Department of Human Services. I have learned so much over the past couple months about how the systems work, best practices to accomplish our goals, and ultimately - how to get our clients the benefits that they are entitled to. It took a few weeks to familiarize myself with the systems, but now I feel confident that I am able to fulfill my tasks. I know I will finish the summer strong. Thanks EJA!



**Update 4:** Wow! What a summer. It's hard to believe it's coming to a close. I have had such a fantastic experience at Legal Aid Chicago. One of the recent highlights was meeting another client in person. These are challenging, uncertain times, and most of our work is virtual: I felt fortunate to sit down with her and learn about her in person. It added a human element to the case, which is often lacking during virtual connections. Both of our birthdays were the week prior, so we got to bond over our celebrations and summer fun. I have learned so much throughout the summer and I accomplished a lot on several clients' cases, while getting to know them and understand their journeys on a more deeper level. It is rewarding to work for an organization that genuinely cares about their clients and is actively making the world a better place by serving the community. I do not know what the future holds for me, what I will be doing next summer, or the role I will assume when I graduate, but I now know that public interest is a great fit for me and I am grateful for my experience this summer!