



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



Name: Valeria Lopez-Fernandez

Law School: Chicago-Kent College of Law

Organization: Legal Aid Chicago

Update 1:

After finishing up my first year of law school, I am excited to announce that I have been interning at Legal Aid Chicago, an organization that provides free civil legal services to people living in poverty in Cook County. I am specifically working in the Immigrants and Workers' Rights group on their 'Trafficking Survivors' Assistance Program (TSAP) Team.

These past two weeks I have gotten right to work and am assisting on a huge case involving 20+ migrant workers who are survivors of labor trafficking here in the U.S. The Legal Aid Chicago team are working hard to help process T and U visas for these individuals all at no cost to them.

If you know me, you know that one of my passions for pursuing law is to ensure that non-English speakers, especially in the Latinx community, are able to learn about their rights and get the help they need to navigate these legal systems in their own languages. My work at Legal Aid Chicago so far has allowed me to do just that. I am also so grateful to say that my position is completely funded for the summer as I was selected to be both a Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) fellow and an Equal Justice America fellow this summer. Thank you everyone who has supported me thus far and continue to support me on my law school journey.

Update 2:

Continuing my work at Legal Aid Chicago, I have been busy busy. Regarding the large migrant worker case that we are working on, I have been spending my time drafting a declaration for one of the clients so that we can submit his application for his T-visa ASAP.



Aside from this case, I have also been working on an Adjustment of Status for a long-time client who was also a survivor of labor trafficking. Finally, I've been able to put my research and writing skills to the test as I have been writing a memorandum on a novel issue that I will be presenting to the Immigrants and Workers' Rights Group later this summer.

I'm so glad that I've been able to apply so many of my skills in different areas to help our clients!

Update 3:

I can't believe how quickly this summer has flown by. After working remotely all summer I will finally get the opportunity to head into the Legal Aid Chicago office this week for a client meeting. With this, I will be almost finished to being able to submit this client's Adjustment of Status application which is exciting.

I also appreciate all the efforts that Legal Aid Chicago has been taking to make the office environment feel safe amidst the pandemic. I'm sad that my time here is soon coming to a close but am so grateful for everything that I have learned.

Entry 4:

Sadly, my time at Legal Aid Chicago has come to a close for this summer. I have learned so much about immigration law while on the TSAP team and am so grateful to everyone on the team.

From learning about T and U visas, talking to clients, and completing an adjustment of status application for a client I really feel like I have taken a huge step in my future career. Although I have always been interested in immigration law, my time at Legal Aid Chicago has really opened my eyes to all the different parts of immigration law and what it would be like to practice in those areas.

I was also able to give a presentation to the Immigrants and Workers' rights group about a novel issue that I spent my summer researching and writing a memo for. It was a really nice sense of accomplishment to be able to share everything I had learned on the topic and answer questions from the team on a topic that can potentially help their clients.

I want to thank everyone at Legal Aid Chicago and Equal Justice America for this opportunity. I would not have been able to spend my summer doing this amazing work without them!