



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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**Law School:** The George Washington University Law School

**Organization:** The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

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### Update 1: June 14, 2021

The past three weeks working in the Domestic Violence/Family Law unit of the Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia have been an incredible learning experience. So far, I have helped my supervising attorney talk to new clients, follow-up with existing clients, and had the opportunity to observe and take notes on a contentious custody hearing. Additionally, I have been able to put my research skills to the test when assisting an attorney who was assessing whether a client met the standard to be awarded a civil protection order, as well as whether key evidence in a custody case could be admitted under a hearsay exception. This week, I am working on drafting a custody order following a settlement agreement that a client and her ex-husband agreed upon in mediation. My favorite assignment thus far was having the opportunity to draft and send out subpoenas for 9-1-1 calls and body camera footage for a client's civil protection order hearing coming up in August. It was incredibly interesting to learn more about how an attorney prepares for a hearing by gathering important evidence.

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### Update 2: June 28, 2021

In the month that I have been interning at the Legal Aid Society of DC, I have completed a variety of projects ranging from client intakes to research. From the time of my last update however, my tasks have been focused on preparing for three different hearings. I have been given the opportunity by different attorneys in the Domestic Violence/Family Law Unit to take the lead on these cases. In one, I am gathering evidence and talking to the client and potential witnesses for an interesting custody case where a child ran away from her adoptive mother because of alleged abuse, and her biological mother, whose parental rights were terminated years ago, is petitioning for third-party custody. In another, I am working on a case to vacate child support arrears that are expired due to the statute of limitations. I drafted the retainer agreement for the attorney on the case and am currently working on a motion to vacate arrears and a memorandum in support of the motion that we will file with the court. The third case I am working on is a civil protection order case where the CPO has been violated multiple times since being entered and have been gathering 9-1-1 calls and body camera footage, as well as



photographic evidence from the assaults. Each case requires me to speak with the clients, gather information from them and other sources, and has given me a sense of how to manage my time and workload as a future attorney. It has been a great opportunity so far, and I am excited to be able to attend the hearings on each case!

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### **Update 3: July 13, 2021**

This past week I have been working on prepping clients for their hearings. I have gone over the questions that my supervising attorney is likely to ask in order to both prepare the client for the questions, as well as give my supervising attorney an idea of what answers will be given and where she might need to ask follow-up questions. I am really enjoying the level of client interaction that I am having with this internship. For my longer projects, I am in contact with clients a couple times a week and I also have smaller assignments that require me to interact with clients on a daily basis. I think that this internship is helping me develop my communication and interviewing skills, which are incredibly important in practice. Next week, I will be attending the hearing of one of my longer projects and am excited to see my work on this case being brought before the judge. I am hopeful that we will have a successful outcome for the client.

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### **Entry 4: August 2, 2021**

The incredibly interesting third-party custody case that I have been working on for over a month now had its final hearing a couple of weeks ago. I spent the week of the hearing talking to the client and making sure we had all our ducks in a row to present the best case we possibly could for her. The hearing that the attorney and I had prepared for was not even remotely like what we were expecting. We were incredibly overprepared compared to what the judge ended up wanting to hear from the attorney and client. Regardless of our expectations of how the hearing was going to go, we secured a victory for our client! She was granted custody of the child at issue and hearing how overwhelmed with joy she was at the result was incredibly powerful. Having had the time to reflect on this case and my involvement in it, I am incredibly grateful that I was given the opportunity to be a part of this case. Hearing the struggles of the client and child and being able to secure the result they wanted was immensely satisfying, and I am glad that this victory occurred toward the end of my summer internship so that I am leaving on such a high note.