



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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**Organization:** Shriver Center on Poverty Law

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### Update 1:

As some of you know, this summer I have the privilege of working at the Shriver Center on Poverty Law as an Equal Justice America fellow. As an EJA Fellow, I will be posting a few updates over the summer to share some of my work and to highlight the importance of and need for civil legal aid.

I am thrilled to be part of Shriver's Legal Impact Network team this summer. The Legal Impact Network is a collaborative of 36 organizations across 33 states and D.C. that work together to coordinate policy and legal strategies to address poverty and racial justice at the federal, state, and local level. Already in the first few weeks of working with this team, I have seen the incredible value of bringing together advocates with diverse expertise to create broad and systemic change.

Our country promises justice for all, but that is not the reality, as 80% of those living in poverty who require civil legal services don't have access to it. Equal Justice America is working to change that by putting law students and lawyers to work to create a more fair and equitable legal system.

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### Update 2:

Time for another EJA Fellow update. One of the issues I am passionate about and feel really lucky to get to work on, in both past roles and at Shriver, is lowering barriers for individuals with past convictions, specifically in housing.

Far too many people are caught in the cycle between homelessness and incarceration. I'm hopeful to see many state and local governments altering screening processes and removing barriers for the most vulnerable communities, and I will continue to advocate for broader change.



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### Update 3:

It's hard to believe I've already been at Shriver for almost a month. I feel so lucky to be a small part of such a dedicated team that turns idealistic goals into achievable ones.

My favorite thing that I've been working on the last couple of weeks has been Shriver's response to a request for information from OMB, which essentially asks stakeholders for best practices in assessing equity within agency policies and programs. Through my research on this project, I've run into countless ways that federal and state agencies create barriers for folks in poverty. From an emphasis on welfare fraud that targets communities of color to limited language access in benefits programs, policies that are meant to serve those in need often stigmatize and criminalize poverty instead. While I'm hopeful to see the progress federal agencies will make using strategies from impacted communities, I'm aware that no change will be made without continued pressure.

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### Entry 4:

Time for my last EJA Fellow update...I can't believe the summer and my time at Shriver are already almost over. I have learned so much from this incredible team of advocates. My time here has opened my eyes to the importance of taking the time for creative strategizing and idea sharing with other attorneys. That collaborative spirit necessary for creating real and lasting impact on a national scale is definitely something I will always prioritize in my work.

Thank you again to Equal Justice America for your support of law students and legal services for those most in need. You can support their work by donating.