



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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**Organization:** The Moran Center for Youth Advocacy (Evanston, IL)

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### Update 1:

Hi all! This summer I am working with the James B. Moran Center for Youth Advocacy serving as a Law Clerk for the Education Advocacy Program. The Moran Center is a non-profit legal aid organization in Evanston, a northern suburb of Chicago, that works to provide youth with the support to successfully emerge from challenging legal situations, tools to make positive life choices, and the ability to thrive in their community. The Moran Center focuses on justice in the courtroom, access to the classroom, and support in the community. While advocating for these youth, the Moran Center works within the community utilizing restorative justice practices to heal and prevent community harms. If you have a minute, take a look at the video I linked below further explaining the Moran Center and their mission.

While pursuing public interest law, many students like myself face significant financial hardship. I am proud and thankful to be awarded an Equal Justice America Fellowship grant that has allowed me to work with the Moran Center this summer. Throughout this summer I will post a handful of updates to show how Equal Justice America empowers and supports my goal to advocate for those who need it most.

Moran Center video: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=576228246217303>

Moran Center website: <https://moran-center.org/about>

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### Update 2:

Another week has gone by, and this summer is wrapping up all too quickly! Time for my EJA Fellow Update #2! My clerkship at the Moran Center has already given me some amazing insight into how my dual education, both in the School of Law and School of Social Work, have the potential to overlap in more ways than I imagined. One of the most beneficial insights I've been gifted thus far is the impact of the Moran Center's hands-on approach to educating and empowering the community.

Toward the end of the summer, the Education Advocacy Program will organize a Know Your Rights presentation to community members. Know Your Rights presentations are organized by legal advocates to provide the public with basic information on what their legal rights are in general situations. Each clerk in the Education Advocacy Program is in the middle of preparing a topic. Recently, I've focused my time on the rights of homeless students and am excited to be preparing my Know Your Rights presentation on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. In all honesty, it's not often that current legislation excites me, especially when



I've seen children fall through the cracks all too often. But McKinney-Vento is a breath of fresh air! I cannot wait to share more as the presentation comes together. While I am already in the middle of researching and preparing for my presentation now, I would still love your feedback! Are there any education-based issues you've seen arise in schools that you'd love more information on? Any areas of education where you've felt lost, and would have benefited from more information on your rights?

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### **Update 3:**

Time for my EJA Fellow Update #3! I've been continuously working on my Know Your Rights presentation and am so excited to be able to share more with you all in the coming weeks. The more I research, the more I understand the gravity of the impact that McKinney-Vento can have on students who face housing insecurity. The Act defines "homeless" as someone who is lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This provides funding that allows grade schools the ability to address complex cases and help students facing hardships remain in a consistent, supportive school setting. Did you know that in Illinois, over 80% of the McKinney-Vento students live in doubled-up housing? Doubled-up housing is a term that can be defined as the sharing of housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship or other similar reasons. A common example of doubled-up housing would be a student's parents facing financial hardship and moving the family into the grandparents' home. Under McKinney-Vento, these children would be able to remain at their original school, even if the grandparents' home was out of district, and could even provide additional transportation services. So much of what I'm researching and gathering is shocking, encouraging and disheartening all at once.

2021 marks the 40th year of James B. Moran Center for Youth Advocacy helping young people in their pursuit of justice in the courtroom, access to the classroom, and restoration in the community. Forty years of "doing justice." What does "doing justice" mean? Whether it is the 1980s or 2020s, doing justice means **STANDING UP**. It means **SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER**. It is a tireless effort to **DISMANTLE** systems that criminalize, institutionalize, and exclude youth and families so they are not heard and not valued.

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### **Entry 4:**

My final EJA Fellow Update!! To say this summer went by in the blink of an eye is an understatement! Through my work at the Moran Center, I was able to advocate for the education of youth in the Evanston area. I learned more than I ever expected in education law, cross cultural lawyering, properly advocating for the client, communication within advocacy and law, and how to mold my own personal way of practicing law. I could not have accomplished these amazing learning objectives if it weren't for the assistance I received from Equal Justice America as an #EJAFellow. Not only did I gain invaluable knowledge and experience in the field of law, but I was able to learn more about the intersection of law and social work. The Moran Center values social work for their clients, and their team of social workers allowed me to learn from their clients and cases. As I progress through my education and into the professional realm, I am able to take these examples to shape my own practices and objectives. I am forever grateful to the Moran Center and Equal Justice America for the knowledge I gained this summer, and the clients I was able to assist in their educational goals. If you feel inspired to help myself or other scholars complete public interest internships like this, please donate!