



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



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Organization: East Bay Community Law Center

Update 1:

As many of you know, I finished my first year of law school about a month ago. Since then, I have been working at the East Bay Community Law Center's (EBCLC) Health and Welfare Practice as a Summer Legal Intern and Equal Justice America (EJA) Fellow. At EBCLC, I have been working with clients to help mitigate unequal health outcomes in communities facing homelessness, poverty, unsafe living conditions, inadequate health care, and other destabilizing social conditions, including systemic racism. So far, I have been working on several projects, such as the HIV/AIDS project, which provides free legal services to low-income residents in Alameda living with HIV, and The Public Benefits Justice Project, which assists low-income Alameda County residents access several public benefit programs. I feel so honored to be working for such an amazing organization and serving the Alameda County community.

About EJA: EJA is an organization created in response to people in the US who can't afford legal help and are forced to choose to either to represent themselves in court or forego legal action entirely. Equal Justice America believes that income should not determine outcomes in the US justice system. It is committed to ensuring that legal help is available to those who need it most.

Update 2:

I have almost completed my first month at East Bay Community Law Center's (EBCLC) Health and Welfare clinic! There, I work closely with Alameda County residents and help them address unequal health outcomes due to poverty. So far, I have been working primarily with folks living with HIV and whose appeals have been denied, terminated, and/or face reduced public and disability income benefits, including SSI/SSDI, CAPI, State disability, general assistance, CalWORKs, and CALfresh. Recently, I started to gather data for a Policy Advocacy Project involving infant Medi-Cal Enrollment.

Finally, this evening I will be working at EBCLC's Name and Gender Change Workshop (NGCW) to help members of the Trans community update their government-issued identification documents so that they better reflect their name and gender. State and federal documents are essential in accessing jobs, housing, health care, public health, and social benefits, as well as basic political and civil rights. For this reason, people whose identity



documents do not reflect their correct name and gender may avoid seeking jobs and other benefits for fear of discrimination and violence. EBCLC's NGCW is a critical step in addressing the disproportionate violence and unequal health outcomes experienced by the Trans Community.

Update 3:

Wow! I can't believe this is already my third Equal Justice America (EJA) update! I have had quite a busy summer at the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC), working with some incredible attorneys and students! At the moment I am preparing to represent a client at a hearing to appeal the denial of their disability claim. In the initial application stage, only about 38% of applications are approved. Working at EBCLC has truly shown me how time-consuming and inaccessible public benefits are for folks who truly need them. I am also currently working on a public policy project with another student from the clinic to address the wrongful termination of Medi-Cal for infants born to mothers who are beneficiaries. According to federal law, these babies are automatically deemed eligible for coverage through their first year. However, we are seeing that many infants are being left uninsured. As a result, many parents are unable or unwilling to bring their infants in for well-child medical appointments because of the large medical bills they would incur. We are currently collecting data to present to the county to give notice to this issue.

Entry 4:

Wow! I can't believe my 1L Summer Internship has come to a close, and I am posting my final EJA Fellow Update. This summer was full of unforgettable moments. I assisted many folks with various Public Benefits Programs, including Social Security Disability (SSD), Social Security Insurance (SSI), and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI). I prepared for a CAPI hearing and assisted a client through the hearing process, which included helping the client navigate the analysis the Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) would go through to determine the case's outcome. It was truly eye-opening to see how difficult it is for folks with disabilities to get on disability and the types of barriers they face when trying to maneuver the Social Security System. I learned that the narrative of low-income folks with disabilities taking advantage of the system couldn't be further from the truth.

Although I had many favorite moments over the summer, the Name and Gender Change Workshop was one of my fondest memories. At the workshop, we assisted clients with the Name and Gender Change process and helped fill out forms and waivers so that our clients could have a name and gender that best suited their identity.

Aside from learning different aspects of health and welfare law the most important thing I learned was how to take care of myself mentally and how crucial that is for public interest work. I began therapy and learning about trauma and how that affected my clients and how it affected me in the public interest space. I learned that if I want to advocate for someone else, I have to advocate for myself and put my mental health first.

I am truly grateful to EBCLC for giving me the opportunity to work there this summer. I also would like to thank Equal Justice America (EJA) for choosing me to be a fellow and sponsoring me to work in Public Interest Law this summer. If you would like to help me and others continue this work, please consider donating to EJA. Thank you!

And an extra special shout out to those who have already donated this summer! Thank you so much for supporting me in this journey!