



## Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



**Name:** Lindsey McComber

**Law School:** Northeastern University School of Law

**Organization:** Greater Boston Legal Services

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### Update 1:

This summer, I have been fortunate enough to be awarded the Equal Justice America Fellowship and receive funding for my internship working for Greater Boston Legal Services in their CORI & Re-Entry Project. As I have seen throughout my first year at Northeastern University School of Law, there is a great need for civil legal aid in the Boston area. Thus far, I have worked with clients who are trying to seal their criminal records to move forward with their lives without the fear of being stigmatized. Prior charges on a CORI can negatively affect future employment and housing opportunities for many years. I look forward to continuing this work throughout the summer and assisting attorneys in advocating for CORI reform.

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### Update 2:

I wanted to check in with another EJA Update for Equal Justice America and update about all that I have been working on in the past few weeks at Greater Boston Legal Services. Recently, I assisted with a CORI sealing clinic and guided multiple clients through the process of filling out sealing paperwork and ordering a CORI report. As things are starting to open up in Boston, there have been many more people trying to get their CORI reports sealed so that they can apply for jobs without fear of being rejected. It has been great to inform clients that their records have been sealed and they are now free to move forward with their lives without a negative stigma surrounding them.

I've also been able to assist in editing an appellate brief for a petition to expunge that was denied. As the expungement laws in Massachusetts have changed in recent years, there are still some challenges in getting certain charges removed from a CORI. The CORI unit is working towards making sure all those who are eligible to have their charges expunged are given a fair opportunity to do so.



### **Update 3:**

For my next EJA Update for Equal Justice America and Greater Boston Legal Services I wanted to give an update on what I have been doing these past two weeks. First, I was able to work on an expungement petition for a client who had old marijuana possession charges. In Massachusetts, possession of marijuana has been decriminalized but these charges still show up when an employer runs a background check. Expungement would allow the record to be destroyed and prevent further stigma surrounding these charges. I was also able to watch a hearing for a client who had not met the waiting periods to seal administratively but was never actually convicted of the crime. A judge has the power to seal a case that ended in a “not guilty” finding without a waiting period. For a judge to seal the charge you must show “good cause” which requires credible evidence of a disadvantage. We have seen time and time again that having a criminal record disadvantages people in applying for jobs or housing. The CORI unit is working to prevent any further stigma and allow people to move forward with their lives.

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### **Entry 4:**

For my final EJA Fellow Update for Equal Justice America I wanted to give an update on everything I have been working on for the past 13 weeks at Greater Boston Legal Services. This summer, I have been given the opportunity to work directly with clients to give advice on CORI issues as well as draft petitions and affidavits on their behalf. This experience has shown me how essential it is for people to have access to legal aid to guide them through the CORI sealing process. I have also had the chance to conduct research on the many ways the criminal justice system disproportionately affects communities of color and contributes to high rates of unemployment and poverty. The CORI project is using this research to advocate for legislative reform to help further ease the devastating effects having a criminal record has on getting housing, jobs, and other opportunities. I have learned so much about systemic law reform advocacy this summer and look forward to using these skills in my future work.

Please consider supporting EJA this summer!