



Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



Name: Rachel Marie Cloutier

Law School: Suffolk University Law School

Organization: Harvard Legal Aid Bureau

Update 1:

About a month ago, I began my internship with Harvard Legal Aid Bureau in the Family Law Unit. It has been an unbelievable first experience into this realm of law. I primarily have been exposed to custody and divorce cases. In light of COVID-19 it has been heartbreaking to see families being held at a standstill because of the past year. It is reassuring to know and be a part of the initial re-opening process with the courts and assisting these families in their goals and endeavors. One of my clients has been waiting over two years to have her divorce finalized because of the global pandemic, and we finally have an upcoming court date! It will be so rewarding to see the end to such a long process.

This experience at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau has been one of the most humbling and rewarding legal experiences I have yet to be a part of. I am excited for the rest of my summer; this experience has been amazing and I am so grateful for this opportunity.

Update 2:

For the last few weeks, I have been working at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau in the Family Law Unit representing clients. Primarily, I handle divorce and child custody cases. Sometimes my experience in family law can be draining and frustrating but knowing that my end goal is that my client becomes less stressed and feels as though they have a new beginning is what continues to drive me in my work.

So far throughout this experience I have learned so much about family law, and how to work a Zoom court room! I have had the privilege and pleasure of standing in front of a judge about three times so far this summer. I am hoping by the beginning of August, some of our hearings and conferences can take place in person. This experience thus far has been humbling, rewarding, and educational. I am so excited for the rest of my summer and eager to use this newly gained knowledge in my upcoming final year of law school.

**Update 3:**

My experience at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau has taught me the value of understanding and having good communications with my clients. I have had the opportunity to work with a variety of clients in the family law unit, handling child custody and divorce cases. So far, the most challenge part of the process is beginning negotiations. Hopefully by the end of the summer my goal is to have successfully negotiated a settlement and avoid going to trial! Without the help and assistance of the EJA Fellowship, I would not be able to have the opportunities and experience that I have been exposed to this summer. I just want to take a moment to thank the EJA organization for their help, support, and encouragement who pursue experience in the legal field. P

Entry 4:

After a summer at Harvard Legal Aid Bureau, in total it was a wonderful and eye opening experience to the practice of family law. I was able to engage in settlement negotiations with various parties, attended hearings, and wrote multiple motions. Harvard Legal Aid gave me the opportunity to practice my writing and oral argument skills. I also felt like I learned the value of patience and understanding in the legal arena. It has inspired me as a young law student to reach out and try new areas of law after gaining some experience. I will take this experience to my final year in law school, my next job, and onto my future career. I would like to thank Equal Justice America for this opportunity, without them, it wouldn't have been possible for such a wonderful experience!