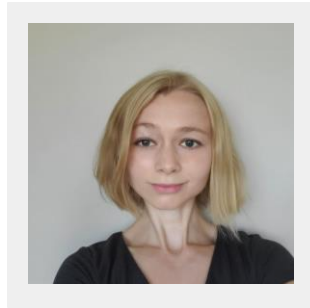




Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



Name: Alida Weidensee

Law School: University of Minnesota Law School

Organization: Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid

Update 1:

Two weeks into my clerkship at Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid, and it's time for my first EJA Fellow Update! This summer, I am so grateful to have been selected for both an Equal Justice America Fellowship and a Public Interest Clerkship Grant from the Minnesota Justice Foundation. Thanks to these organizations, I am spending the summer working with MMLA's Immigration Law Project. With the support of the staff at MMLA, I have been able to focus on addressing the needs of noncitizen youth. The amazing team at MMLA has already taught me so much about both the immigration system and about working in a non-profit setting. From asylum to the Special Immigrant Juvenile Status classification, legal options for noncitizen youth are complicated, and these cases frequently require creative problem-solving. I look forward to doing everything I can to make an impact for noncitizen youth this summer.

**Any opinions expressed in this post are exclusively my own and do not represent the views of Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid.

Update 2:

Week four of my summer clerkship is done, and now it's time for my second EJA Fellow Update! I've spent these last two weeks working on a variety of different immigration cases. I've had a lot more direct client contact as well. As I gain experience with clients, I've been thinking back on a virtual training that the Summer Clerks at MMLA attended on cultural bias and the importance of empathy. One idea that I am trying to incorporate from the training is that everyone has biases; what makes the difference is the ability to slow down decision making and check your own assumptions while truly trying to take in the other person's point of view. This idea seems particularly important in the immigration field. I am so grateful to the folks at MMLA for this training, and I'm hoping to continue incorporating these ideas into my work going forward.

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Update 3:

Time for #EJA Fellow Update number 3! Working at MMLA, I knew that I would have the chance to gain a deeper understanding of immigration issues. Recently, I've had the opportunity to put that understanding to the test. Together with my fellow Summer Law Clerk, Abdiasis Hirsi, I have been working on putting together informational presentations on recent changes for U visa applicants. U visas are available for victims of certain crimes who are helpful to law enforcement, and the recent changes could have a big impact. The presentations will be available in English, Spanish, and Somali, and we look forward to filming them soon. I hope that folks will find them helpful!

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Entry 4:

It's time for my last EJA Fellow Update! I feel so grateful for the opportunity to have spent my summer at Mid-Minnesota Legal Aid. This summer, I had the chance to work on a variety of projects related to immigration and youth. Highlights include writing an asylum brief, working on Special Immigrant Juvenile Status cases, and making a presentation on U Nonimmigrant Status with Abdiasis Hirsi. Not only did I learn about different immigration processes, I was also able to get an introduction to working in a non-profit environment. I hope to carry this experience with me in future public interest roles.

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