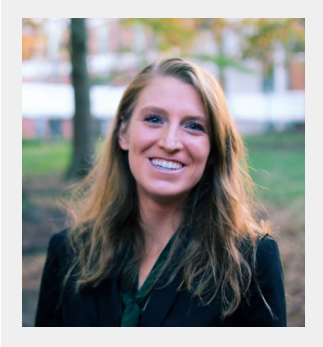




Summer 2021 EJA Fellow:



Name: Meredith Kilburn

Law School: University of Virginia School of Law

Organization: The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia

Update 1:

My first few weeks working at the Legal Aid Society of DC were full of orientations, trainings, and new assignments. I am working with the Housing Law Unit, and through my first few assignments I have already learned so much about housing law in DC.

One of my assignments has been reaching out to former Legal Aid clients and pro se litigants to survey them about helpful materials on Legal Aid's website. Through these phone calls, I have heard firsthand from former clients whom Legal Aid assisted. The former clients I spoke to were extremely grateful for Legal Aid and spoke glowingly of the attorneys with whom they worked.

I'm also working with a client to secure a transfer voucher as a reasonable accommodation. After drafting and sending a letter to the housing authority requesting a transfer voucher, I was surprised at the rapid reply we received. Despite our client sending numerous emails to the housing specialist with whom she worked, she received no reply for months. Within hours after we emailed the letter, my supervising attorney received a response. Unfortunately, I think this situation happens more often than one would like to believe. Those receiving housing vouchers have a right to reasonable accommodation—this right should be respected whether or not an attorney is requesting the accommodation.

Update 2:

I've continued to enjoy my work at the Legal Aid Society of D.C. We received good news for the client seeking a transfer voucher—we were able to negotiate with their landlord and they will be able to end their lease early and



search for new housing using the voucher. I'm also working with other interns to update legal resources available to pro se litigants.

This week, I've been doing research on how states accommodate limited English proficient (LEP) individuals in jury selection. I was shocked to discover how many states disqualify LEP jurors. Despite the push to make more interpreters available for LEP witnesses or parties, only one state guarantees the right of LEP individuals to serve on juries—New Mexico.

Finally, I drafted a letter to a landlord to prevent them from unnecessarily transferring a tenant out of their apartment. This case demonstrates how even when renter protections are in place, if tenants are not aware of their rights, then the protections aren't doing much good.

Update 3:

The summer is flying by! The past few weeks I've been working with an attorney and another intern to revise a court's pro se handbook. Even after two years of law school, a lot of the details of civil procedure can be complex and unclear. The handbook details how to file or respond to a civil complaint, then continues through some trial procedure. Our revisions focus on simplifying language, clarifying procedures, and emphasizing important deadlines.

I worked with pro se litigants prior to law school, and it takes an incredible amount of time and energy to navigate the legal system without formal training or assistance. My hope is the revised pro se handbook can better guide those filing cases without attorneys through the legal system.

Entry 4:

This is the last week of my summer at Legal Aid DC, and I've been reflecting on all the interesting projects I got to work on this summer. In the last few weeks, I drafted a motion to seal a criminal record and an accompanying declaration. I also helped a client fill out a StayDC application, which provides both retroactive and proactive rental and utility assistance.

I've really enjoyed my time working with Legal Aid DC, and the client and attorneys with whom I've worked! I'm grateful to be able to serve the DC community through this work!