

Hailey Berry

This summer I have been an intern with the King County Bar Association Housing Justice Project (HJP). HJP provides free eviction defense to indigent citizens in King County. Right to Counsel is a crucial service that ensures tenants' access to a free attorney to defend them in eviction proceedings. Right to Counsel has been recently developed in Washington that significantly reduces the chances of tenants being evicted. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many people's risk of experiencing homelessness due to income and health issues. HJP has been able to step in to mitigate some of the impacts of COVID-19. Additionally, HJP frequently refers clients to other community resources including rental assistance. Thanks to the help of the HJP, many people are able to resolve issues with their landlords and maintain housing.

As a legal intern, I have been assisting attorneys with a variety of tasks including drafting trial briefs, drafting court orders, legal research, and client interviewing. After I completed an assignment, an attorney would provide me with edits and feedback. This process was very helpful in developing my legal drafting skills. I really appreciate how HJP will throw the first-year interns at big drafting assignments to provide us with the opportunity to learn the law and gain experience drafting court documents. I have also been conducting client interviews for HJP. I will frequently complete client intake interviews which start the process of a person retaining HJP under the Right to Counsel. This summer, I have learned an incredible amount about landlord-tenant law in Washington. HJP did a fantastic job of providing me with enough guidance to practice legal skills, but enough freedom to learn from the experience.

Washington has only recently passed the Right to Counsel for indigent tenants, so HJP is actively setting precedent for tenant rights in the state. There are only a few other states in the country that have similar Right to Counsel laws for tenants, so HJP is also setting precedent for the country. It is incredible to work alongside the attorneys that have worked so hard to pass the Right to Counsel in Washington State. These attorneys not only have insightful views on the legal system, but they also demonstrate a level of grit that I admire. The culture at HJP breaks legal stereotypes by being very inclusive, collaborative, and kind, while still being incredibly successful.

Overall, my first-year internship experience has been wonderful. I have learned a lot and met incredible people while doing extremely important work. I believe that everyone has a right to housing and I fully support the HJP mission. HJP has reminded me of some of the reasons I wanted to attend law school. I find the work to be very rewarding. I hope to continue to do similar work in the future. This experience has reaffirmed my interest in public interest work on both professional and personal levels. I am very grateful for the experience and mentorship that I have found as a summer intern at the Housing Justice Project.