

Niloofar Irani

This summer, I am working with Northwest Justice Project (NJP) in their Eviction Prevention Unit (EPU). I am very excited about this opportunity. This newly formed team's primary mission is to provide assistance to people across the state of Washington who are in the process of being evicted from their homes. I am thankful that I have the opportunity to work in a field of the law that is not only so important to one's wellbeing but also to be a part of a truly progressive team that is changing the way evictions are handled for people who are in difficult financial circumstances. Because of my previous work in the field of housing law, I am aware of how complex this area of the law can be and how many people are unaware of the rights that are available to them.

My supervisor Michelle has been an invaluable resource for expanding my understanding of the ways in which this area of law is put into practice. I have had the opportunity to observe various attorneys in action and gain a better understanding of how each type of case is approached. Watching U.D. hearings from different counties and observing how different judges rule on different cases has been the single most enlightening thing for me. Every single one of them has taught me about a different aspect of the application of the law to everyday situations.

In April 2021, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee signed SB 5160, which makes the state the first to guarantee counsel for indigent tenants in eviction cases. This is what makes this unit so unique. It was put in place by the Office of Civil Legal Aid to enforce and implement this new law and the ins and outs are still being fleshed out to provide the best assist to the most amount of people.

At the moment, I am in the process of composing a memorandum on hotel/motel and mobile home protections and defenses, in addition to an analysis of the right to counsel in these different types of living situations. As a result of my research to this point, I have gained an understanding of how to provide assistance to tenants in situations that are not currently covered by the new laws.

When I need more information about a client's case, talking to them is one aspect of my job that I really enjoy. I always make sure to let them know that while I cannot give them legal advice, I am still here to support them to the best of my ability. These interactions provide a human dimension beyond that of just a name identified in court documents.

I hope by the end of my internship I have enough knowledge and understanding of this field that I can potentially assist individuals with their housing needs. I look forward to working with NJP on any and all projects to strength this unit for its future success. I can only hope that one day I may get the opportunity to work for or with this amazing organization that has been one of the best legal aid resources in this state for over 20 years.