

## **Ankita Mishra**

This summer, I had the opportunity to extern at the King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office (KCPAO) in the Criminal Division. The Division is tasked with prosecuting all the crimes occurring in King County, ranging from misdemeanors like DUIs and traffic violations, to felonies like sexual crimes and homicides. Specifically, I was working in the Violent Crimes Unit, which prosecutes felony crimes like assault, robbery, burglary, and occasionally, homicide, vehicular homicide, and vehicular assault.

I worked primarily on assault and unlawful imprisonment cases, wherein I conducted legal research and drafted memorandums; the research and writing skills I learned during 1L came in handy to achieve these tasks. However, my most time-consuming task involved reviewing and summarizing discovery materials; I watched several hours' worth of police body worn video and in car video footage, attempting to spot possible evidence for trial; and I summarized police reports and charging packets for quick and easy reviewing by trial attorneys. My supervisor, who is also supervises all the trial attorneys' cases in the unit, assigned me a project to analyze several backlogged assault and robbery cases to check whether they could still be successful trial, despite the absence of the victims and/or their testimonies as evidence. This task included studying hearsay and its exceptions very quickly on the job in order to make well-informed recommendations. It was a difficult task for me since I have not taken evidence yet, but it helped me understand rules of evidence and hearsay exceptions to a certain extent and I believe this knowledge will prove extremely helpful in my evidence class in the fall.

In addition to these tasks, I also had the opportunity to observe numerous trials; including various stages like pre-trial motions, voir dire, testimonies of witnesses, victims, and experts, opening and closing statements, verdicts, and sentencing hearings. This experience gave me a vast understanding of the criminal trial process, helped me learn rules of evidence and criminal procedure, and reinforced my interest in pursuing litigation as a career. Further, I attended weekly Early Plea Unit staffing meetings, where the prosecutors reviewed evidence like surveillance footage in new cases, deliberated upon the charges to be brought against the defendants, and decided if and to what extent charges may be reduced and pleas may be offered to defendants in existing cases. I was also given the opportunity to attend some Homicide staffing meetings wherein prosecutors analyzed the sufficiency of evidence and decided on next steps. Learning about how these decisions are made, factors that are considered, and what strategies are used was an enriching learning experience.

Additionally, the KCPAO organized various field trips for the summer externs. First, we visited the King County Sheriff's Office firing range where we learned about the structure, parts, and functioning of firearms and received training in shooting a handgun. Next, we visited the King County Medical Examiner's Office, where we learned about process followed in handling bodies after death in different circumstances, including homicides. We also learned how drug tests are administered, autopsies are conducted, and DNA is lifted from skeletons. Both these experiences were an amazing learning and eye-opening opportunity. They helped me gain an insight into the additional tasks and duties that prosecutors must undertake and various other departments that they interact with in order to understand certain evidence and concepts better, and use it to explain their arguments to the jury in plain language, in addition to the actual legal work itself. We also visited the U.S. Attorney's Office where we toured the courthouse and met with multiple Assistant U.S. Attorneys, a federal judge, and an FBI agent. This was a great opportunity to hear about interesting experiences and unreal cases, learn about the path to join the office, and understand the process of criminal prosecution in a federal jurisdiction.

Overall, I had a wonderful and incredibly educational experience during my externship at the KCPAO. I am glad to have had the opportunity to work with very experienced and kind attorneys in a delightfully welcoming office, engage in meaningful tasks and discussions, step out of my comfort zone to try new things, and learn deeply about trial procedures practically rather than theoretically. I am confident that I will be able to apply the skills and knowledge gained from this externship at law school and in my future legal career. Working at the KCPAO was a fulfilling experience which helped me embrace my interest in criminal law and litigation practice, and honestly, there is nowhere else I would have rather worked during my summer!