

Isabel Noto

This summer I had the opportunity to intern with Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP). ELAP is a nonprofit organization providing free legal services to individuals facing crises related to domestic violence, housing, finances, healthcare, and immigration. By providing various types of legal services and clinics, ELAP strives to bridge the gaps in the civil legal system for those who cannot afford a lawyer and additionally works with community members to solve legal issues through Know Your Rights sessions and free legal clinics.

During my internship, I was paired with one of the family law supervising attorneys to teach me about legal clinics and family law. In this position, I participated in various trainings in housing and family law, where I learned about substantive law and procedural practice in both fields. I also got to shadow client interactions and reach out to clients myself for updates on their cases. This experience was enlightening and reinforced the importance of placing clients at the forefront of legal practices. It allowed me to begin to develop my own strategies for client interactions.

I was also able to witness family court proceedings, which offered valuable insights into both the micro and macro aspects of the legal process. I started to understand how each commissioner conducted their courtroom and this helped shed light on the nuances of the judicial system. Most significantly, I recognized the immeasurable value that attorney assistance brings to these cases, providing unwavering support and guidance to clients throughout their legal journey. Additionally, while in this internship, I learned about family law motions and documents, such as parenting plans and domestic violence protection orders. I learned how to fill out these motions and how to fill out each form in order to emphasize the client's story and make sure that their voices were heard. I was also able to help draft demand letters for individuals requesting accommodations from their landlords. I also enjoyed collaborating with the other legal interns in developing these documents and working to understand each client.

Moreover, I had the opportunity to work on research assignments for the attorneys in the office. With the research, I wrote briefs on the statute of limitations in parenting plan motions and about motions to vacate. I also worked with the other legal interns to write memos about our research and to help each other develop our research skills. I found it very helpful to have another legal intern to bounce ideas off of and to review each other's work. Additionally, I was able to help draft demand letters for individuals requesting accommodations from their landlords. I liked getting to utilize the skills I learned in Legal Writing 1 to work on each of these projects. In addition to legal writing, I also had the opportunity to write an informal blog post about recent changes to domestic violence law, specifically regarding the recent Washington case *Davis v. Arledge*. This case highlighted the importance of electronic monitoring as a safety measure for domestic violence cases. I enjoyed researching current case law and making predictions on how this ruling could affect future legal issues.

I am very happy my first experience working in the legal system was with ELAP. This internship allowed me to grasp the essential role of legal aid organizations and the transformative power of compassionate and knowledgeable attorneys in ensuring access to justice for those in need.