

HCCC 2022 Summer Fellowship Report

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This summer, thanks to the gracious support of the Harvard Club of Cape Cod and the Harvard Center for Public Service and Engaged Scholarship, I was able to intern at the WilmerHale Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School. The Legal Services Center is the public interest clinical arm of Harvard Law School and has the mission of fighting “for fairness, justice, and legal, economic, and social change, by addressing our community’s civil legal needs and training the next generation of public interest lawyers.” Every semester, 2L and 3L Harvard Law students take on civil cases and even bring them to trial as allowed by Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court Rule 3:03. Over the summer, law students from around the country and a select number of undergrads continue the term-time work. As an undergrad, I was able to work in the exact same capacity as law students besides actually representing clients in court.

My work primarily dealt with Social Security and VA appeals as well as criminal record sealing. In addition, I led an exhaustive outreach effort to Cape Cod and the Islands. I held outreach events at public libraries in Falmouth and Orleans and on Martha’s Vineyard. The Legal Services Center has a robust Veterans’ Clinic, so I also held an event at the Cape Cod Vet Center in Hyannis. Besides these events, I also notified and met with various senior centers, non-profits, and veterans’ organizations to spread the word about the services we provide. From these outreach events, I was able to take on several clients. More importantly, though, I have established relationships with community organizations on the Upper, Outer, Mid, and Lower Cape as well as the Islands so that they know to refer low-income individuals with civil legal issues to the Legal Services Center in the future.

My outreach events and client meetings were the most transformative experiences of the summer. It humanized the sometimes seemingly mundane work I was doing (legal issues involve a lot of paperwork) and provided a concrete purpose for the work. Additionally, it revealed how much individuals had been let down by large federal bureaucracies—especially veterans. It also illuminated how so many individuals have issues such as physical and mental disability that prevent them from completing even simple tasks. We need to give more credit to social and case workers for their work, because the individuals they help can often be quite difficult to assist. Ultimately, this internship has solidified my desire to go the law school, and I thank the Harvard Club of Cape Cod for making it possible.