



Since 1993—
working to
protect
children
and families
in need

What We've Done

- Equal Justice America has sponsored fellowships for more than 2,300 law students to work with over 250 legal services organizations across the country. Interning under the supervision of experienced attorneys, our fellowship recipients have provided crucial assistance to low-income clients struggling through the complexities of our civil justice system.
- EJA has paid out nearly \$6.5 million in grants and has provided approximately 700,000 hours of free legal services with programs that work to protect the rights of the poor.
- In September 2002, we began funding two-year post-graduate EJA Fellowships, launching the public interest careers of outstanding young attorneys. Nearly \$1 million has been committed to these post-graduate fellowships.
- In September 2000, Pace University Law School established the Equal Justice America Disability Rights Clinic with a major grant and an ongoing commitment from EJA. We have contributed more than \$300,000 to the EJA Clinic, which has become an integral part of the Law School's highly regarded clinical program.



Virginians for Equal Justice

The promise of equal justice is the promise of America. “With liberty and justice for all,” are the words recited every day by our nation’s school children. It is a promise that has not been kept.

The American Bar Association estimates that the United States fails to meet 80% of the civil legal needs of the poor. Unlike criminal defendants who are guaranteed an attorney under the U.S. Constitution, most low-income litigants must face adversarial proceedings without the benefit of counsel.

80% of the legal needs of the poor are not being met.

—American Bar Association

Virginians for Equal Justice was launched in January 2007 to provide critical new resources to organizations in Virginia that deliver legal services to the poor. Equal Justice America has awarded a two-year \$80,000 post-graduate fellowship at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Petersburg. In addition, EJA has funded more than 60 Law Student Fellowships in Virginia, putting students from all of Virginia’s law schools to work across the state on behalf of the poor. Since the inception of Virginians for Equal Justice, EJA has provided more than \$250,000 in new resources to the state’s legal aid programs.

Who We Are

Equal Justice America is an independent non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation established in 1993. EJA has become a national leader in providing opportunities for law students to work with organizations that deliver civil legal services to the poor. Our efforts expose a new generation of future lawyers to the urgency of pro bono assistance to those in need. Students at more than 70 law schools now have the opportunity to take part in the Equal Justice America Fellowship Program.

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE NOW!](#)

EQUAL JUSTICE AMERICA

LAW STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS

Building II - Suite 204 • 13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, Virginia 23112
(804) 744-4200 • Fax (804) 744-6789
E-mail: info@equaljusticeamerica.org

▶▶ [Click here to visit www.equaljusticeamerica.org](http://www.equaljusticeamerica.org)

Virginians for Equal Justice in the News...

Lawyer seeks public benefits for Tri-Cities citizens

October 30, 2009
By LUZ LAZO

When citizens are denied public benefits like food stamps or unemployment insurance, they rarely seek legal counsel, said Geraldine M. Doetzer, the only public-benefits attorney at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Petersburg.

"If they apply and are turned down, they feel that it is something they didn't deserve, so they don't pursue a legal avenue even though they have a right to those benefits," she said. "An attorney could be crucial for them to get the benefits."

Doetzer, a 2008 graduate of the College of William and Mary Law School, started the center's public-benefits law practice in October 2008, as part of a two-year postgraduate fellowship with Equal Justice America.

Since then, the 25-year-old has been helping low-income residents from the Tri-Cities.

Doetzer said she has found that many people are unaware about the help an attorney can give them to obtain benefits. The Legal Aid Justice Center offers free counsel to individuals, especially those in need because of income, age and disabilities.

Equal Justice America has in the past three years put 55 Virginia law students to work throughout the state on behalf of the poor, Executive Director Dan Ruben said.

Doetzer's work alone has generated more than \$50,000 in benefits ranging from retroactive food stamps to thousands of dollars in unemployment insurance, he said. She is currently handling about 50 cases, but she said the need in the area is greater.

"Our practice area is home to some of the state's poorest residents, but since at least 2005, there has not been a legal-aid attorney in the area dedicated to providing advice and representation in cases involving public-benefits programs," Doetzer said. "There are a lot of families who could really benefit from additional services."

Richmond Times-Dispatch

Legal aid program helps the poor

January 19, 2009
By LYNDA RAINES

Dan Ruben believes in taking the initiative. In 1990, when Ruben was a second-year law student at Pace University in New York, he founded the Public Interest Law Scholarship Organization (PILSO). PILSO raised funds to enable law students to work during the summer months providing legal services to the poor.

Based on the enthusiastic support Ruben received from donors, he was convinced that PILSO, which still thrives at Pace Law School today, could succeed as a national organization, and in 1993, he founded Equal Justice America (EJA) to serve the legal needs of the poor in the nation.

In the 15 years since its inception, more than 2,000 law students have received EJA fellowships. EJA has awarded nearly \$6.25 million in grants and provided approximately 625,000 hours of free legal services to the poor.

"We continue to work hard to make a real difference in people's lives, families threatened with foreclosures; women assaulted by violent and abusive husbands and boyfriends; the elderly who have been scammed in the marketplace; and the disabled fighting to have needed benefits restored," Ruben says. "These are the people we go to bat for every day by supporting the legal services programs and legal aid societies in Virginia and throughout the country."

Ruben moved Equal Justice America to Midlothian in 2000. In 2007 he started Virginians for Equal Justice, an EJA program that works with Virginia's law schools to place law students at state legal service offices. Several Virginia law students have also received fellowships to work for the legal rights of the poor outside Virginia.

With the help of a grant from the Cameron Foundation, Geraldine Doetzer (William and Mary Law, class of 2008) began a two-year \$80,000 post-graduate EJA Fellowship in October at the Legal Aid Justice Center in Petersburg.

The Village Mill

Law students' intro to legal needs of poor

Midlothian-based group provides fellowships for work in legal aid offices

June 2, 2008
By KARIN KAPSIDELIS

Her first client got a \$3,000 "line of credit" from a car-title lender with an interest rate of 300 percent. In just six months the woman has already had to pay back \$5,000 -- with just \$16 going to the principal, the rest to interest.

For University of Richmond law student Miriam Sincell, her client's predicament is an example of the sort of case she hopes to devote her career to.

Sincell is one of 18 students from Virginia law schools to receive fellowships to work at state legal aid services through Virginians for Equal Justice.

The program was started last year by a nonprofit organization based in Midlothian called Equal Justice America. EJA is providing summer fellowships to 170 law students nationwide.

While the U.S. Constitution guarantees legal representation in criminal cases, there's no such right in civil cases.

"If you're threatened with eviction from your home, or you're getting beaten up by your spouse and want to find a way out of the relationship, there's no guarantee of representation," said Dan Ruben, the founder and Executive Director of Equal Justice America.

He cites American Bar Association studies that show 80 percent of the civil legal needs in this country are not being met.

Ruben hopes EJA is creating "a small army of lawyers" committed to public service either directly or through pro bono work. Students selected for the fellowships have demonstrated a commitment to work on behalf of the poor when they graduate.

As a third-year law student, Sincell has a practice certificate that allows her to work with clients.

Sincell is one of five UR law students with EJA Fellowships. In addition to the car-title case, she's helping clients who face eviction or loss of government housing subsidies.

Richmond Times-Dispatch