

EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS®



**Jen Samantha D.
Rasay**
Class of 2018

**National Center for
Law and Economic
Justice**
New York, NY

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Equal Justice Works is the national leader in creating public interest opportunities for law students and lawyers. Collaborating with the nation's leading law schools, law firms, corporate legal departments, and nonprofit organizations, Equal Justice Works offers a continuum of opportunities that provide the training and skills that enable attorneys to provide effective representation to underserved communities and causes. Equal Justice Works is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization. For additional information about Equal Justice Works, please visit:

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FELLOWSHIP OVERVIEW

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Advocate for low-income persons with hidden disabilities to challenge work requirements that bar access to public benefits through advocacy, impact litigation, and community based organizing.

NEED ADDRESSED BY PROJECT

Several state Medicaid agencies, prompted by legislatures, have requested waiver of protections from the federal Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services. These waiver proposals seek to impose work requirements as a condition of eligibility to receive Medicaid benefits. Medicaid work requirements will discourage program participation, particularly for persons with disabilities who are among those who need Medicaid the most. For persons with hidden disabilities, or disabilities who are not immediately apparent, Medicaid work requirements pose an even more significant problem because they are not often identified and thus do not receive reasonable accommodations throughout the benefits application and/or renewal process. The Medicaid work requirement will be yet another hurdle for persons with hidden disabilities who already face challenges in navigating the complicated public benefits procedure.

THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THIS PROJECT

Jen is the right person for the project because:

- She is dedicated to protecting the rights of vulnerable communities
- She has strong personal ties to issues faced by low-income families and persons with disabilities
- She has worked on two public interest-focused projects, one investigating unfair consumer debt collection practices in New York City and the other creating a pro se habeas corpus guidebook for non-citizen detainees in PA

PLANS FOR FIRST SIX MONTHS OF FELLOWSHIP

In the first six months, Jen will:

- Track the status of pending state waiver proposals and the implementation of newly approved waivers with a focus on Medicaid work requirements
- Analyze the impact of the Medicaid work requirement by reviewing state plans for implementation and identifying those that do not screen for disability or provide accommodations for persons with hidden disabilities
- Research unlawful practices by interviewing disability rights advocates, public benefits agency representatives, and Medicaid benefits recipients with hidden disabilities