

Sofia Ream

Wellman Hill Grantee, Summer 2025

30 September 2025

Wellman Hill Grantee Reflection

Through the support of the Wellman Hill grant I received for the summer of 2025 I was able to complete an internship as an intake specialist at The Chandra Law Firm. The Chandra Law Firm is a Cleveland-based private practice that specializes in civil rights litigation, namely employment and housing discrimination, police brutality, malicious prosecution, and class-action lawsuits. Being awarded the Wellman Hill grant gave me the wonderful opportunity to be immersed in the inner workings of a highly successful law firm and gain a broader understanding of the field of law.

My role at Chandra primarily was composed of client intake: conducting phone interviews to determine if potential client's situations would be a good fit for the firm. Although I cannot speak to the specifics of the matters I reviewed, I spoke to individuals from across the country facing racial discrimination in the workplace, aggression and brutality from police during routine traffic stops, and local courts violating procedural agreements. As I continued conducting these twenty minute interviews, I learned how to follow stories more closely and pick out the most important elements of their cases. My intake reports were reviewed by our attorneys and accepted or declined, which also gave me further insight into the most important elements of a viable case, allowing me to improve my efficiency in following intake interviews.

Another element of my internship included assisting in document review for upcoming court cases. This included reading over public records, reviewing police bodycam footage and security footage, and engaging with clients to get evidence such as text conversations. Reviewing

hundreds of pages of documents and hours of video footage assisted me in improving my reading comprehension, as with practice I began to understand the most important elements of evidence more quickly and take note of the most vital information to provide the firm's attorneys with the most relevant points.

Throughout my internship I was able to witness significant elements of the firm's work. This included several depositions in which I was able to witness our attorneys review evidence with plaintiffs and act quickly on their feet in their conversations with these individuals to determine the significance of the evidence. I learned from observing depositions the valuable skills of litigation and how important it is to have skills of quick logical thinking and confident speaking for a future in litigation.

One particularly valuable learning opportunity I experienced during my internship was a workshop on trauma-informed intake I attended. It opened my eyes to the reality of my intake interviews, that although it could be difficult to discuss client's situations with them and get the answers I was looking for, it was often the client's first time fully discussing a traumatic event that had occurred. It gave me an understanding of how empathy and kindness can still be used while maintaining professionalism in a legal setting.

Overall, my experience at The Chandra Law Firm was incredibly valuable to my future career endeavors. I saw how much hard work is required of a small civil rights firm, and was inspired by the dedication of the attorneys and paralegals to advocate for the betterment of their client's lives and the writing of wrongs that had been committed on them. I am very grateful for the generosity of the Wellman Hill grants, and am excited to continue exploring positions in the legal field with this experience enriching my knowledge.