

**Placement: Cobb County Juvenile Court – Judge Amber Patterson**  
**School: University of Georgia School of Law**

This summer, I interned with Judge Patterson in Cobb County Juvenile Court. I spent most of my time observing the proceedings in her courtroom and learning about the intricacies of dependency cases in child welfare. I also drafted orders, researched pertinent evidentiary issues, and completed a memorandum on the responsibility of DFCS when they have an immigrant child in their care.

One thing I learned about the field of child advocacy work that surprised me was how close-knit child welfare professionals are. I knew that the legal community is a small world, but I've found that is even more true within niche specialties like child advocacy. It reminded me how important this summer is for making connections with potential future colleagues. I got the opportunity to meet and observe the work of so many professionals: judges, attorneys, DFCS staff, court staff, and more. Child advocacy requires the efforts of so many people, and ESCAP helped me to better understand each of the unique roles that exist. I'm grateful for the connections I created with the help of ESCAP.

Judge Patterson is an incredible judge and I feel lucky that I had the opportunity to work with her this summer. Her entire legal career has been in the child welfare sphere, and I think this is evident in her decision-making. One of our training week speakers emphasized that we need child welfare experts in the field; Judge Patterson is the perfect example of this. Her care for children, families, and attorneys in her courtroom is evident. Her years as a CASA extern, guardian ad litem, child advocate attorney, and now as a juvenile court judge have made her an expert in child welfare issues. I learned so much by observing her courtroom and hearing from her how the field has changed and evolved over the years.

My main research project this summer dealt with immigrant children in DFCS care. Cobb County has several Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJS) cases. These involve youth who are undocumented immigrants and have been declared dependent in juvenile court. A question arose as a result of these cases: what is the responsibility of DFCS when they have an undocumented youth in their care? This was ultimately the research question I sought to answer. Unsurprisingly, there was not a clear answer in case law or any federal or state statute. I ultimately relied on language within the DFCS manual to argue that DFCS has a responsibility to help undocumented youth obtain citizenship before they turn 18.

I believe the work I completed this summer will have an impact on courtroom practice. I think this is especially true in regard to the evidentiary issues I researched. We learned in our training week that many people do not believe the rules of evidence apply, or

apply differently, in juvenile court. However, observing the relevant rules is vital in juvenile court, especially during testimony in dependency proceedings. The research I did on hearsay objections and admissibility of certain records will be applicable in a vast majority of cases that Judge Patterson will hear in the future. Regarding my immigration research, I hope that it will help judges craft arguments in support of helping undocumented youth obtain citizenship status, which is vital to permanency.

One of my most memorable experiences this summer was attending the Cobb County DFCS Graduation Ceremony. This ceremony celebrated youth in foster care who graduated high school this spring. According to the National Foster Youth Institute, only 50% of foster youth will finish high school, and just 3-4% will obtain a four-year college degree. Getting to attend this ceremony after a particularly difficult week in court made me feel hopeful. I think it's easy to get caught up in the difficulty of the child welfare system and the struggles that families face. Getting the opportunity to see positive outcomes for these individuals, despite the odds, was an encouraging experience.

Participating in ESCAP helped me gain vital experience working in child advocacy in the state of Georgia. Getting to hear the diverse and valuable experiences of the other ESCAP participants was a wonderful aspect of the program. I know that I will take the lessons I learned and skills I developed these past few months and carry them into my future career.

**Placement: Voices for Georgia's Children**  
**School: Emory University School of Law**

I am finishing up my ESCAP internship at Voices for Georgia's Children (Voices) with immense gratitude for all that I have learned in a such a short amount of time. In considering graduate programs, I sought a degree that would allow me to influence policy changes in education and improve the lives of children. The Barton Center is one of many factors that drew me to Emory Law. Voices was the perfect placement for me because of their whole-child approach to advocacy that touches on a vast array of issues in child policy. Though I had some experience in child advocacy before law school, this summer showed me how much I had (and still have) to learn. I am so thankful for the ESCAP program and to my placement for providing the space to grow as an advocate for children alongside other passionate individuals. The ESCAP training week not only provided a wealth of information but also a warm welcome into the child welfare law community in Georgia. In my internship, I conducted research that focused on barriers to healthcare for children in Georgia. I primarily worked on a project involving Medicaid access for juvenile justice-involved youth.

A few months ago, I knew little to nothing about Medicaid. I felt unsure about juvenile justice because I never saw myself working in a "criminal law" space. I now understand why this population is so important; these youth are children who have been chronically underserved and their "delinquent" behavior is merely a product of that. The field of child welfare law touches many different areas of law and the problems that children face in education, health, and justice are deeply intertwined. I was tasked with looking into whether Georgia was complying with federal law in their process for enrolling eligible youth in Medicaid after incarceration. There is currently federal policy that excludes "inmates" from receiving Medicaid benefits while incarcerated. The 2018 Support Act, however, requires that states suspend Medicaid coverage for incarcerated individuals under 21 rather than terminating it. This law also requires that states restore healthcare coverage for these individuals upon release. What we found in our research was that Georgia's method for doing so was to provide information on Medicaid to youth and their families upon release and rely on parents to re-enroll their children, terminating care in a manner that is contrary to federal law.

These complex issues were overwhelming to me in the beginning, but my supervisor, Lesley Kelley, was patient and reassuring as I learned. I've come to understand how much patience and understanding is required in child advocacy, specifically in the nonprofit/policy realm. Early in the summer, my supervisor applied for a grant to fund this research and despite her time and effort, the application was denied. It can be frustrating knowing the work that goes into efforts to effectuate change ultimately lies in the hands of legislators after proposals are made. I struggled with the pressure to solve problems in the child welfare system, to do right by children who have little support. I've come to have much more realistic expectations and I understand that change takes time. The advice I've held onto throughout this process is to focus on making a contribution.

I'm hopeful that my contribution to this research will lead to policy changes within the state of Georgia. My supervisor and I have been communicating with staff at the

Department of Juvenile Justice and have an interview in place to discuss some of these issues and get a better understanding of why certain procedures are in place. I've researched other states with more effective policies for Medicaid re-enrollment, some of which I believe are realistic for Georgia to implement, despite inevitable political barriers that coincide with issues like Medicaid. I'm inspired by the individuals I've shared this experience with, and I'm grateful that the ESCAP program provided opportunities to gather and share experiences with other interns. I began my internship after the ESCAP training week feeling very hopeful that so many intelligent, thoughtful minds are coming together to do this work. It's easy to get discouraged by negative headlines and decisions from politicians who are out of touch with the reality that children experience in the welfare system, so it's very important to have a strong support system in place when doing this kind of work.

**Placement: Hall County Juvenile Court**  
**School: The University of Georgia School of Law**

This summer I had the opportunity to help draft orders, conduct research, and assist with community events. I was tasked with drafting sections of termination of parental rights orders. This involved listening to the recordings of the termination of parental rights hearings, summarizing witness testimonies, and compiling the research done for the issues in the cases. I also had the opportunity to co-write an order denying grandparent visitation with another intern. This was a particularly interesting assignment, because I helped conduct the research for the proceeding and the judge used my research to help support her ruling. The judges also asked the interns to participate in an event where local girl scout troops came to the courthouse to earn a badge on civic knowledge and involvement. We led one of the groups on a tour of Gainesville Square to highlight important landmarks, including the eternal flame and Roosevelt Square.

My favorite/most interesting project that I worked on this summer was a Termination of Parental Rights Order and Order Denying Grandparent Visitation for the same family. I found this work particularly interesting, because I was able to follow the case to its conclusion, while gaining experience in a variety of legal work. The first part of this project that I worked on included listening to the termination of parental rights hearing recording and summarizing the testimonies for the termination of parental rights order. This aspect of the project helped me gain a better understanding of how to determine which facts are relevant to the various statutes that the judges have to abide by in a termination of parental rights trial. Judge Diaz often emphasized the importance of scrupulous work when conducting a termination of parental rights trial, because the termination of parental rights is referred to as “the civil death penalty.” Judge Diaz would remind us that the Court of Appeals scrupulously combs through appealed termination of parental rights cases, so I knew the importance of documenting an accurate testimony summary. Through listening to the recording, I gained a better understanding of the family and each individual actor involved in the case. This information greatly aided my ability to co-write the Order Denying Grandparent Visitation later on in the summer.

This case was particularly devastating, because the maternal grandparents had lost their daughter, who died from a fentanyl overdose. The dependency case ultimately ended with the father’s rights being terminated and the children remaining in their placement with a family member in another state. When the grandparents filed a motion for visitation, the Judge requested that the interns, including myself, conduct research regarding whether or not grandparents could be denied visitation after the death of a parent and the termination of parental rights as to another parent. The judge provided me and one of my fellow interns with the opportunity to draft the full order. This was the first time I had been involved in drafting an entire order from scratch. I listened to the recording of the hearing on the motion for visitation and drafted summaries of the provided testimonies. Then I worked with my fellow intern to incorporate the research that we had previously done into the specific findings from the Court. We sent the order

to one of the staff attorneys, received feedback, and then we were able to finalize the order and send it off to the judge. It was a wonderful experience to essentially follow the life of the case and see how a dependency case has ripple effects throughout extended family systems and even at times within communities.

I felt that the judges in Hall County did an excellent job of showing how child welfare and juvenile justice is a very collaborative environment and field of practice. They exhibited this through maintaining courtrooms that fostered civil discussions of difficult topics and by taking the time to speak with all of the interns after long days of hearings. Judge Diaz in particular made a habit of coming by the intern office every day after he had court. He allowed us to ask all of our questions and even welcomed us to challenge why he ruled in a particular way, so that he could better explain his thought process. I found these conversations very valuable, because it allowed me to engage in critical thinking and evaluate why I felt the way that I did about decisions the judges made

I was also particularly encouraged by the ways that I saw the judges express empathy and compassion to struggling parents. This helped me better understand the degree to which juvenile court is meant to be a court of rehabilitation and support, rather than punishment. However, even though the court makes it abundantly clear that it wants to help the families, there can still be a great deal of resistance from parents, caregivers, and children who become involved in a dependency case. I experienced this firsthand when a judge asked me to escort a couple to indigent defense. From that interaction, I reflected on how being involved in the court system can be very traumatic regardless of how many services are being provided to the individuals. This couple talked to me about how they had to miss an entire day of work and they probably would have to do the same for future hearings, which could directly impact their ability to meet aspects of their case plan. I appreciated the opportunity to interact with this couple and listen to their concerns and be a source of support. It was a valuable lesson in understanding that there are no small roles in child welfare and the importance of leading with empathy and grace.

When thinking about my work's impact on my placement, I feel like my biggest contribution is that I helped the Court to stay current on their orders. The judges often talked about how Hall County Juvenile Court is not experiencing the backlog that other courts are experiencing from the pandemic. This relates to the importance of judicial efficiency, especially in a field of law that revolves around very emotional cases with outcomes that can directly impact constitutional rights. It is important to stay current on getting out orders, so that individuals are clear on the parameters of their case plans and so the court can run efficiently.

With the "in the moment" research that I completed for the judges; the judges were able to make informed decisions in their proceedings. The research that I provided directly impacted their rulings at the conclusions of proceedings. For example, in the grandparent visitation order, the judge directly cited the research that I conducted when she made her final ruling to deny visitation. She then asked us to include that specific

research in the final order. I felt very proud to have been an integral part of this proceeding and final order, but as I previously mentioned, it was difficult to see how the family had been torn apart by the dependency case. This had a personal impact on me, because it was difficult to know that something I worked on was contributing to a painful experience for someone else. However, I was reminded of the fact that we are here to maintain and protect the best interests of the children involved. The children should always be the focus of our work, and the work I did on that order meant that two children were able to stay in their placement without disruption and further trauma. That is something to be proud of.

In terms of the potential impact of my work on future courtroom procedure and practice, I was able to contribute a checklist for guardianship orders that future interns could use in their work. The judges here also tested out having the interns complete work for all of the judges, instead of just being assigned to one judge and I felt that it was very successful. As an intern, I found the experience of completing work for all of the judges to be very valuable, because each judge is particular in how they like their orders done and how they approach legal issues. It was a great experience to witness different perspectives on the law and to learn to adapt to what different judges need.

Overall, I had an incredibly positive experience at Hall County Juvenile Court this summer. I had the opportunity to engage in important legal work, including drafting orders and completing legal research for the judges. I also had the opportunity to participate in other projects that I found equally satisfying. These included setting up the giant HAPPY ADOPTION DAY sign on the front lawn, picking up a pie to celebrate attorney birthdays, escorting a couple over to indigent defense, and assisting the female judges with an event for a local girl scout troop. I appreciated the trust that the judges placed in me, and the confidence in my abilities that they helped me develop through completing work that has such an intimate and powerful impact on vulnerable individuals.

At the end of the summer, many of the attorneys working in the court asked me if, after observing this work all summer, I still wanted to pursue a career in child welfare. I can confidently say that I have never been so sure of a decision. While I am not ignorant of the fact that this work does carry a heavy burden, I cannot imagine a better use of my time and resources than helping people initiate their healing journey. The positive changes being made through the child welfare system can be slow and small at times. However, that does not take away the fact that positive change IS happening on a daily basis. I could not have asked for a more fulfilling summer job, and I am grateful for the opportunity to be a small part of such an excellent court system.

**Placement: Kids in Need of Defense**  
**School: Mercer University School of Law**

I had the pleasure of interning with Kids in Need of Defense (KIND). KIND is a non-profit organization that helps address the needs of immigrant and refugee children entering the United States unaccompanied by a parent or legal guardian. Over the last ten weeks, I have completed Dependency Packets, EOIR checks, a Request for Evidence, Motions for Prosecutorial Discretion, a Motion to Reopen, an I-765 application, research projects, and attended a dependency hearing. Working on these various projects has improved my legal writing, reasoning, and research skills. Interning with KIND overall has solidified my desire to practice child welfare/advocacy law and piqued my interest in immigration law.

Of all the projects I have worked on, there are two that I found extremely interesting and rewarding. The first was a research memo that would be used for a minor's asylum application. She was fearful of religious persecution in her home country because she was Catholic, and her neighbor was an indigenous spiritual healer. Because the subject matter was engrained in religion, I was able to research scholarly articles, religious texts, and ancient religious practices to draft the memo. The project stretched my capacity for research and building legal arguments. It also opened my eyes to religious persecution and the many forms it comes in. Further, researching an issue so near and dear to the client's heart made me a zealous advocate. I pushed through and was able to make a thorough legal argument out of a topic that is rarely utilized when filing an asylum application.

The second project that I found extremely rewarding was drafting a response for a Request for Evidence from a T-visa application. This project was different because I wasn't doing it alone. Me and another intern divided the sections, and we each drafted arguments for different parts. It was so helpful seeing another law student's perspective on an argument and how he drafted it. We strategized and conferred with each other, which gave us practical experience working in the collaborative side of the legal profession. Also, I learned that a lot of USCIS workers are well-trained, but not attorneys. Thus, the arguments, facts, and information have to be structured in a way that is easy to understand, resembling a line-item from a checklist. It really highlighted the importance of writing for your audience, and laying a legal foundation piece by piece to ensure the message you are trying to convey is easily received.

One thing that surprised me about child advocacy work, particularly in immigration law, is that unaccompanied children are expected to navigate the process of entering the United States alone and advocating for legal remedies on their own. The children are



usually fleeing dire situations, have a language barrier, and have endured trauma and stressors on their journey to the States. It is a lot for anyone, let alone a child, to have to endure. That is why I am so thankful for KIND, and the many other organizations in child welfare and advocacy. These children are vulnerable, easy targets for exploitation, and need the services and legal expertise we are trained to offer.

The attorneys at KIND influenced my perception of child advocacy work by highlighting the importance of rapport, reputation, and relationships. Each attorney I worked with took time to truly understand, not just what the government or opposing counsel was arguing or asking for, but why. In taking the time to find out why, you learn valuable insight about the government and a judge's expectations. You also begin to anticipate legal arguments, which help you build yours. Because there are a handful of legal remedies, you appear at the same courts, in front of the same judges, working with the same OPLAs and GALs, which creates a unique opportunity to build rapport and extend grace to the people you often work with. There are few degrees of separation amongst attorneys, and building professional relationships is key to a successful career.

The most impactful project that I worked on was the Request for Evidence for a T-visa. T-visas (visas for victims of human trafficking) are unique in that only 5,000 visas can be awarded per fiscal year, but the cap has never been reached. Because they are viewed as more difficult to be awarded, most advocacy firms avoid them. However, KIND's Atlanta office has one of the highest T-visa stats in the company. They face difficulty head-on and are attempting to normalize T-visa applications. Every T-visa application they successfully attain is shared with other offices in the company to serve as a template and guide so other offices can do them too. Being a part of the Request for Evidence was a great experience, and if the T-visa is granted, it will be amazing knowing that some of my work not only helped the kiddo that was applying but will help children across the country do the same thing.

The attorneys, social services staff members, and supporting staff members are all amazing at KIND. Child advocacy can be cumbersome, but they each do their jobs with zealousness, compassion, and expertise. I loved my experience with KIND and recommend any student considering ESCAP to seek them as a potential match.

**Placement: Gwinnett County Juvenile Court – Judge Simms**  
**School: University of South Carolina School of Law**

### **Introduction**

Over the summer, I had the privilege of interning in Gwinnett County Juvenile Court with the Honorable Judge Simms. For much of my summer, I observed dependency and delinquency proceedings. During my observations, I was exposed to the variety of roles for a lawyer within juvenile court. Furthermore, I was able to in real-time research legal questions that emerge during dependency proceedings. Additionally, I watched both the staffing and proceedings of the Family Treatment Court. Distinctively, I saw the significant role a judge plays in a voluntarily accountability court.

When I was not observing in the courtroom, I was drafting orders and working on Judge Simms's open case backlog. I reviewed all open cases inside JCATS (the online court management system) that had no upcoming hearings to see if there is in fact a closure order filed, if a closure order needs to be filed, or if the child is over 21 years old.

### **What did you learn about the field of child advocacy work that surprised you?**

Witnessing all aspects of juvenile court, I learned that child advocacy work requires each person in the courtroom to consider the specifics of each individual child. A lawyer can prepare with an abundance of case law but, if each proceeding is not taken looked at from the perspective of youth the child's best interests will not be met. The best way to ensure each case is looked at individually is to permit the children to be heard and meaningfully participate in their dependency case. Though we are in a post-COVID world many people still prefer to use Zoom to participate because it is easier for their schedule. However, when children are present in front of the judge the children have a chance to share what is important to them for the court to know before the court makes its decision.

### **How did your supervisor(s)/mentor(s) influence your perceptions about child advocacy work or your placement in particular?**

Overall, this internship permitted me the opportunity to see every aspect of a juvenile court and expanded my perspective beyond what I ever imagined possible. Going into this summer I was worried about my ability to look at cases from an unbiased viewpoint. However, I was steadfast in my belief that approaching legal topics from an advocacy standpoint was always the right approach to take as a lawyer. Nevertheless, watching Judge Simms's approaching legal decisions from an analytical perspective showed me that in order to be a well-rounded advocate one must look beyond their side. As an advocate, one often believes that a judge decides the outcome based on their singular approach to the law. But this summer, I learned that there is truly an art to judicial decision-making. Going into my last year of law school, I feel more prepared and confident about my abilities to be a persuasive child advocate.

### **How did your research/work have an impact on the organization with which you were placed? Will it result in future legislation or affect DFCS policies/procedures**

**or courtroom practice?**

The majority of my research in Gwinnett County Juvenile Court investigated niche legal issues that emerged during contentious dependency proceedings. Juvenile court is unique in that a significant number of evidentiary issues are not specified within the Juvenile Code or state law. In one instance, I conducted research into whether a child's out-of-court statements can be admitted as a party opponent exception. I compiled case law from other states and detailed their perspectives on this evidentiary issue. Giving Judge Simms a wide range of legal views on a vital child advocacy issue assists her in the future to make the strongest legal decision possible. In future court proceedings, my research into a variety of evidentiary gray areas will permit Judge Simms and everyone that comes before her to know what is and is not expected during court proceedings.

**Placement: Fulton County Juvenile Court – Judge Yokom**  
**School: Emory University School of Law**

This summer I had a fantastic time interning for Judge Yokom in Fulton County Juvenile Court. Everyone I met was very welcoming and friendly, so I felt very comfortable asking questions. I had minimal knowledge about dependency and delinquency as I began my internship, but now that my internship is coming to an end, I am very pleased that I have now observed and researched both dependency and delinquency cases at most stages.

After a few weeks interning at the juvenile court, observing dependency and delinquency proceedings and attending ASCEND, I noticed that delinquent youth often have dependency issues or the same familial risk factors as dependent children, but they are not always dually involved in the system. Dually involved youth are children involved in both realms of the juvenile court: dependency and delinquency. Fulton County has a system in which authorized people can see all cases a child is involved in, which gives that authorized person notice if the child is dually involved. However, the problem I noticed is that some delinquent youth do not have the proper support behind them as the court tries to rehabilitate the children. I noticed that some efforts to rehabilitate delinquent children involved parental involvement. But, if the child does not have the proper parental support behind them, then the child may fail at completing the programming used to rehabilitate that child. These observations led me to research how other states handle dually involved youth and the programming that those courts use. From my research, I found that while Fulton County does have a filing system that allows authorized persons to see both cases of a child if they are dually involved, most juvenile courts in other states do not. There are also states that have multidisciplinary teams in place for dually involved children in which the child's probation officer, child and family services case manager, parental figure, therapist, and/or any other resource the child may need get together at least once a month and discuss the child's progress. Using these discussions, the child's team can then try and figure out a personalized plan to help rehabilitate the child.

While I did observe both dependency and delinquency proceedings during my internship, I felt drawn to delinquency more. One of my favorite projects this summer was working on an order responding to a motion to suppress. Prior to the motion to suppress hearing, I researched applicable law based on defense's motion to suppress. Then, I created a short memorandum explaining the laws in a way that wasn't so one-sided. After about a month and a few continuances, it was time for the motion to suppress hearing. Even though I was only observing the hearing, I felt like I learned so much such as when and how to object, call witnesses, and enter evidence into the record. After the hearing, I researched more law that the parties alluded to in their arguments and examinations of the witnesses, created another memorandum, and helped the staff attorney (my supervisor) draft the order pursuant to the judge's ruling.

On the other hand, I still enjoyed observing dependency hearings. My supervisor's expertise is in dependency, so she really made sure I understood what was

happening at every hearing and the law behind those hearings. I am very grateful for how nurturing and patient she was with me while I asked the simplest questions until I felt like I had a stronger grasp on the concepts. She would always respond with the most intelligent questions for me to research and prepare memorandums of which furthered my knowledge of the law. Her influence greatly expanded my view on child advocacy and taught me that while Fulton County has a great system and programming, there is always something that can be improved on or done for the betterment of the children.

I really appreciated how the memorandums and research projects I was charged with completing were of use for everyone in chambers and were often used as references. I love to help people be more productive, so knowing that what I did had an impact helped me stay efficient and focused on the task at hand. I also have hope that the proposal paper I completed regarding dually involved youth helps Fulton County

Another project I worked on this summer was a proposal paper regarding how Fulton County can best help dually involved youth. In that paper, I recommended for the court to reinstate its multidisciplinary team that focused on dually involved youth. This could potentially result in a DFCS policy change as each child's case manager would need to be present at each meeting. I also hope the paper could help change courtroom practice as judges and staff would be able to note when a child is dually involved and recommend them to the multidisciplinary team/program so that they can be in programming that properly supports them.

I feel very lucky to have this experience as I feel like I learned something new every day. Judge Yokom is phenomenal as he treats every child with respect while also cautioning the children about future consequences if they continue going down their current path.

**Placement: Fulton County Juvenile Court – Judge Crawford**  
**School: Emory University School of Law**

This summer I had the privilege to work at the Fulton County Juvenile Court under Judge T. Natasha Crawford. As a newer judge to the bench, I had the invaluable opportunity of learning from a professional with years of advocacy under her belt while observing her transform the 3C courtroom into her own. In a way, just as I was attempting to navigate my first internship, 3C was experiencing several firsts, too. Over the summer, I researched legal issues, analyzed briefs and motions, drafted orders, wrote legal memoranda, and observed delinquency and dependency cases. A few of the legal issues I researched include whether juveniles have the same Second Amendment protections as adults, the legality of Fourth Amendment searches and seizures of juveniles, and how a parent's mental capacity influences whether the Department recommends reunification, non-reunification, or the termination of parental rights.

The first legal issue I analyzed this summer was whether the United States Constitution or Georgia case law recognizes that juveniles have the same Second Amendment protections afforded to adults. In 2022, the Supreme Court decided *New York State Rifle & Pistol Ass'n, Inc. v. Bruen*, which reversed a lower court's upholding of a New York law that necessitates residents who possess firearms in public to obtain concealed carry permits, which require the applicant to show "proper cause." The Court found that the law violated the Fourteenth Amendment by preventing law abiding citizens from exercising their Second Amendment right to bear arms in public. Moreover, the Court reasoned that restrictions on gun use are constitutional only if there is a tradition of such regulation in American history. Further, at the end of June, the Supreme Court decided that it will hear *United States v. Rahimi* to determine if federal laws that currently prohibit citizens with domestic violence restraining orders from possessing firearms are consistent with the nation's historical traditions.

The *Bruen* decision is relevant in the context of juvenile law because it raises the question of whether juveniles have the same Second Amendment protections as adults. The findings of *Bruen*, and the Court's willingness to hear *Rahimi*, suggest that there is no consensus as to which adults should be restricted from possessing guns, let alone whether children are restricted in the same capacity. Recently, a juvenile came before Judge Crawford and argued for their constitutional right to carry a firearm for self-defense under the Second Amendment. If the two-prong analysis in *Bruen* is applicable to juveniles, then the State must show that juveniles have been similarly restricted by federal or state firearm regulations before being able to determine whether the juvenile's conduct is outside the parameters of the Second Amendment. I located case law that restricted a juvenile's ability to purchase or receive firearms, but no case law that explicitly prohibited, or supported, juvenile firearm possession. My research on this project has piqued my interest in a topic that will be further developed by both the Georgia state courts and the eventually the Supreme Court during my time in law school.

The Second Amendment research was my favorite, and most surprising, assignment of the summer because I was utterly unaware that juveniles in Fulton County are frequently charged with possession of a firearm. In fact, there were very few delinquency weeks without a charge for possession of a firearm under the age of eighteen.

In my second research project, I evaluated a motion for suppression of evidence recovered from the Terry frisk of a juvenile. I reviewed the evidence and case law to determine the validity of the search. Ultimately, I found that a motion the Defense filed to suppress the findings of the search should be denied because the search and seizure were lawful pursuant to Terry v. Ohio and Georgia law. This was a validating experience for me because Judge Crawford agreed with my findings and allowed me to draft the order to deny the Defense's motion. I have gained practical experience, confidence in my research abilities, and an in-depth preview of criminal procedure and evidence, two courses I will be taking the following academic year.

In addition to providing the research Judge Crawford referenced to issue her order, I had the opportunity to help customize templates to organize her dependency cases. For example, I created a template designed to allow Judge Crawford to quickly reference the condensed information and notate concerns during dependency hearings. Ideally, she can continue to modify the form as her needs evolve. Even if the templates change or become useless, I hope the experience encourages Judge Crawford to continue to mentor other students. But as Judge Crawford's first judicial intern, she can't forget me, right?!

I believe that the opportunity to work with Judge Crawford on both delinquency issues has influenced my perception of delinquency work. Coming into my internship, I had prior experience in dependency work as a CASA and I had no interest in criminal work at all. However, my preferences have completely changed. Judge Crawford's experiences as both a public defender and a prosecutor, her passion for advocacy, and approach to solving legal issues has made me view delinquency work in a new light. Although I struggle internally with the idea of adjudicating children, I have come to realize that it may be the best way to put services in place for families and provide new support systems. The best delinquency weeks are when adjudicated juveniles return to court with a renewed sense of ambition, progress, and appreciation of their growth.

The women in 3C chambers have also taught me that as an advocate, being inquisitive and knowing the law are essential. Juvenile court judges are privy to a lot of discretion and can reach deeply into each family. So, it is crucial that juvenile court judges reinforce the integrity of each family by uplifting each member with available services. In my experience, several families come to court without much knowledge of court proceedings and how the outcomes can affect them. But it has been reassuring for those in front of Judge Crawford to witness a judge questioning attorneys about the reasoning behind their decisions, ask the children and families what they believe their needs are, and simplify the complicated legal jargon. Judge Crawford always tells me to abide by two rules as a legal advocate: (1) ask what the law is, and (2) do good work to

do good. Overall, my time with Judge Crawford and the families before her were so impactful and I intend to take the lessons learned in 3C and apply them to the legal issues I encounter in the future throughout my legal career.

All in all, I had the best time this summer with Judge Crawford and the other 3C staff. I could not have asked for a better chance to learn more about the law, engage in child advocacy work, and learn how to conduct myself as a professional in the legal field.



**Placement: Fulton County Juvenile Court – Chief Judge Scales**  
**School: Emory University School of Law**

During the 2023 Emory Summer Child Advocacy Program (ESCAP), I had the wonderful opportunity to intern for Chief Judge Scales. I learned so much about the intricacies of child welfare, from both the initial ESCAP training week and my 10-week internship in the Fulton County Juvenile Court. This opportunity allowed me to witness the different roles a lawyer can have within the field of child welfare. I previously just thought it would be limited to the child attorney or public defender, but from being in the court room and speaking to various people, I broadened my horizon of what legal work in this field can look like.

While interning, I wrote a memo in response to a motion regarding state services and the Americans with Disabilities Act, collected data through interviews with court personnel to compose a bench card for additional judicial considerations for disposition hearings in delinquency cases, and I collaborated with the Truancy Intervention Project about the impact of lead exposure on children's behavior in school that can impact truancy. Moreover, I also observed multiple dependency and delinquency court proceedings and assisted with research related to these proceedings.

Writing the bench card was my favorite project because I got to interview multiple court professionals, like Probation and Department of Behavioral Health, to gain more insight from them. The opportunity to hear from these professionals and then apply their knowledge to the legal constructs was quite eye opening and allowed for me to creatively engage in child welfare.

My supervisors and mentors throughout this program, including Judge Scales and her Staff Attorney, influenced me to pay attention to the application of a rule, and not just what it says on paper. I learned to focus on how the actual application of something can really determine if it will be beneficial or not. For example, an order for a child to go to therapy 3 times a week will be ineffective if the family has no reliable form of transportation and the bus ride to the center requires several route changes. This fact will make all the difference in whether a child receives these services or not, so ordering them to do something without ensuring its feasibility makes all the difference.

My research and work through the reasonable efforts memo I wrote, and the bench card will provide greater clarity and answers to nuanced questions in this field. This information will also be shared to the other Judges in the court by Judge Scales. My research and work on these issues will provide a helpful road map for judges to consider so they widen the scope of the child's life the court observes when making these impactful decisions. My research and work for the Truancy Intervention Project will allow them to consider the impact of a child's natural environmental contaminants on their mind, body, and behavior. This will allow for more holistic and robust advocacy for the child and will address more contributing factors to the behavioral issues at school, which may have previously been ignored. This collaboration arose out of my own interest in environmental law's intersection with child welfare. When I asked Judge Scales if she has ever considered this, she immediately had me meet with Truancy Intervention Project to work more on this issue.

I loved that I got to engage in so many different assignments and experiences. This allowed me to become more involved in the arc of child advocacy by seeing multiple scenarios play out in court, and then completing the research and writing to accompany it. This occurred for the memo I wrote in response to a motion filed regarding the reasonable efforts required by the state along with requirements from the American with Disabilities Act. Basically, how would the state services be altered when dealing with a parent with a documented disability, and how would this change the type of reasonable efforts the state had to provide. I am so proud of the research and writing I did for this topic. Through this project, I am so proud of the legal analysis I completed and how I applied the law to this issue. I also learned so many practical lawyer skills, like more effective methods for conducting legal research.

Overall, I had an amazing summer full of new opportunities. This has further ignited interest in family law and child welfare. I now feel prepared to enter this field upon graduation.

**Placement: Douglas County Juvenile Court**  
**School: Emory University School of Law**

In Douglas County I first worked on projects that would be considered “routine work” for a staff attorney. I started observing hearings, then taking extensive notes on the proceedings. I progressed to editing orders for correctness, then finally drafting court orders myself. When I viewed the notes on my first drafts, I received quite a few corrections and feedback. It took at least five orders and countless hearings to become a truly effective editor. By the end of the program, I felt confident taking on any order assignment for the Court. Like a staff attorney, I answered several legal questions for the judges. Responding to these questions involved some complex statutory interpretation, some case reviews, and a lot of discretion on my part as to which legal argument I would present to the judge. In providing my answers, I learned to write one-page briefs that were accurate and concise.

I also had the opportunity to work on unique projects that furthered the Court’s diversionary programs and efforts to decrease recidivism. First, I created promotional materials for CHANCE Court—a mental health accountability court that provides intensive services for children with diagnosed mental health disorders. Second, I created a presentation for school resource officers in Douglas County, focused on how officer discretion can influence the lives of youth who may or may not be funneled into the justice system. I found that creating the presentation for school resource officers felt the most meaningful to me. I thought it was an excellent exercise in doing my own research, then trying to convey it in accessible terms to a non-academic audience. In my mind, this is one of the more important parts of being an “advocate” in a legal or policy context. That is, giving popular appeal to more complex and well-researched ideas, to sway parties towards a position that truly benefits society.

My judges and staff attorney taught me the importance of bringing the right attitude to the juvenile court room. I consistently saw my judges have kind, open conversations with children in both dependency and delinquency proceedings. In one of the most stressful moments of these children’s lives, I watched as this soft candor helped the kids relax while having the opportunity to understand the situation that they were in. I originally thought that, like other practices of law, a formal, litigious nature would get you far in a juvenile court trial. But more often, it was a compassionate voice that was also the most persuasive. Interestingly, observing these compassionate attorneys made me realize that quite a few lawyers in these proceedings did not seem interested in the work, or did not understand basic concepts of the juvenile system—like the difference between a GAL and a child’s attorney. Perhaps this is just a problem specific to Douglas County, but I can also imagine considerable “burn-out” across the field.

Although I took on some interesting research projects, I think that my work that was most useful to the Court was simply getting them ahead on basic tasks that the staff attorney did not have time for. For instance, I made a database of every appealed case from a juvenile court starting in 2020. I was essentially just doing case briefs—something that the attorneys didn’t have time for as they sat in proceedings, read motions, reviewed and created orders, and discussed different programming for youth coming into care or looking at possible detention. I think doing this work will give the

Judges a more organized way to consider decisions, and expediting the Judge's job is important, considering the length of time that some cases will get stuck in court. So, while my work may not directly affect DFCS policy or legislation, it may play a small role in making the Court more efficient.