

**Research reports from Undergraduate Students  
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Date: August 6, 2021

Name: Pounds, Anna

Major: Economics

Internship Company: Fredericksburg Office of the Public Defender

Location: Fredericksburg, Virginia

During the summer of 2021, I worked as an undergraduate intern with the Fredericksburg Office of the Public Defender, which provides a client-centered approach to court-appointed legal counsel. This particular office handles criminal cases from four different jurisdictions—Stafford, Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, and King George.

In the beginning of my internship, I primarily worked on projects while attending some court proceedings. One of these projects was creating a universal motions and appeals bank for the office, so that there is organization-wide, institutional memory. The attorneys do all kinds of interesting work for specific cases, and by creating a motions bank, this allows their work to be accessible for future use. Another project I had the opportunity of undertaking was a data-driven defense/risk assessment analysis project. The criminal justice system generates data every single day, all of which can be collected and analyzed, and all of which can be used to evaluate systemic failure, systemic success, and systemic gaps that can be exploited or filled. My job was to find a breakdown of what data is collected to inform risk assessments at these agencies and how the agencies analyze the data in order to produce the risk assessments used in court proceedings. Another project I was tasked with was to research ride sharing companies like Uber or Lyft to see if they could donate gift cards to alternative disposition courts, which serves as an incentive to participants. Additionally, I worked on a project to redesign the office's waiting room to make it "trauma-informed." This project was particularly exciting because I gained

knowledge on color psychology and trauma-informed design. At the conclusion of my internship, Mia Robertson and I gave a presentation on our recommendations for the redesign of the waiting room to all of the attorneys in the office along with the other interns.

Throughout my internship, I was encouraged to ask questions and pursue the areas of criminal defense that interested me. One of these unexpected areas was alternative disposition courts, which provides individuals with the opportunity to get their felony charges dropped upon completion of the two-year intensive program. Attending these meetings and court proceedings for the Drug Court Program allowed me to have conversations with judges inside their chambers and ask many questions to gain insight on perspectives from the bench. Another opportunity, possibly my favorite task of the summer, was helping with voir dire, or jury selection, for a jury trial in Spotsylvania. For this specific task, I was given a list of potential jurors, which I then would research via Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, and many other sites. The trial resulted in a not guilty verdict, which was remarkable to witness from the side of the defense. From this internship overall, I was able to gain valuable insight regarding the ins and outs of public defense and criminal law as whole.