

LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY

2019 Campaign for Justice

Closing the Justice Gap . . . All New Jerseyans Must Join
Together to Secure Greater Justice



*“In the end, society is served when people
are able to vindicate their interests in a court of law.”*

2017 Circle of Honor Inductee Deborah T. Poritz
Former NJ Supreme Court Chief Justice

New Jersey's Justice Gap Is Real



“Unavailability of legal representation denies equal justice. When the issue is as fundamental as housing, or food, or health care, or keeping your children, the consequence is devastation.”

Without true justice, New Jerseyans living in poverty suffer great harm, every day, every hour. And that harm in turn damages each of us, and all of us together—our children, our families, our neighbors, and our collective humanity. It is long past time for this to end. We must balance the scales!”

Melville D. Miller, Jr.
President and General Counsel
Legal Services of New Jersey

What Is at Stake?

For those living on the edge, legal representation can mean the difference between job stability and unemployment, retaining or losing custody of children, keeping a roof overhead or becoming homeless. It means food on the table, critical health care, even life and death.

- ◆ For nearly all civil legal problems, there is no right to a lawyer.
- ◆ The 34% of New Jerseyans who live in true poverty are deprived of at least one of seven essential areas of basic human need.
- ◆ This year, one-third of those in true poverty will have at least one civil legal problem for which they need a lawyer.
- ◆ For 94% of those problems, they will have no lawyer.

Legal Services: For 54 Years, Balancing the Scale

Key Elements of the Statewide System

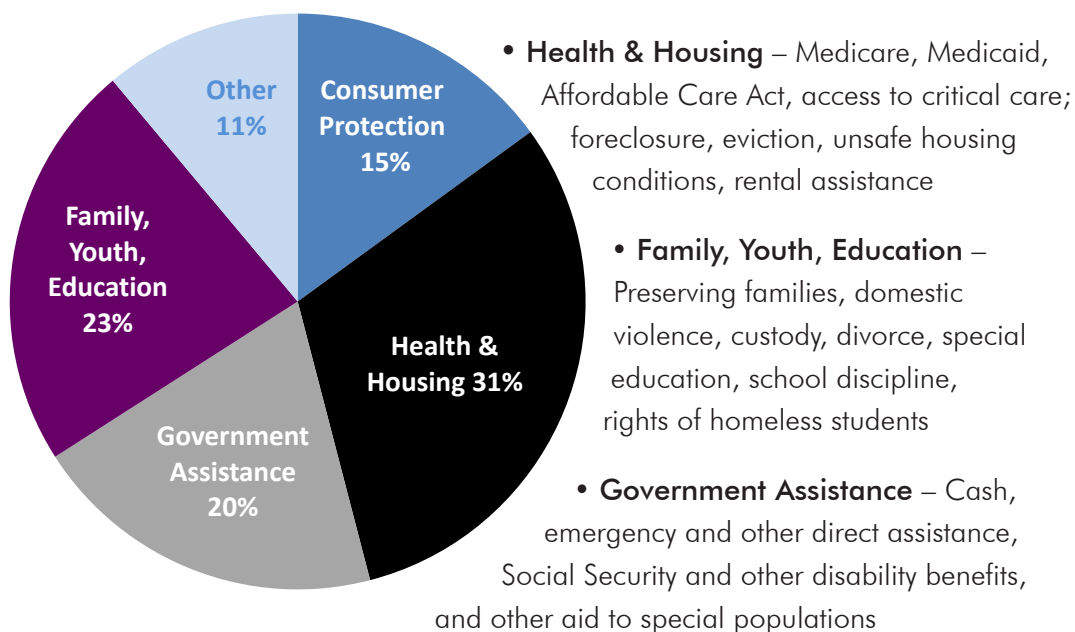
- ◆ Offices and a presence in every county: 22 offices statewide
- ◆ 2.5 million cases and 9 million clients over 54 years
- ◆ Helped reform and shape every major area of law affecting people living in poverty
- ◆ Millions more assisted each year through legal information via self-help websites and in-person presentations



DAVE, a retired Air Force veteran, was thrilled to land a job as a truck driver. Driving was manageable despite his chronic back pain. When his employer no longer needed a driver and reassigned Dave to tasks he was physically unable to perform, he had no choice but to leave. His unemployment benefits claim dragged, but, with the help of a Legal Services attorney, he was finally awarded benefits and paid off the debt he incurred while trying to survive without an income.

"The process was long and drawn out, yet Legal Services kept . . . pushing . . . we finally made it through."

Annual Legal Services Cases By Type



- **Consumer Protection** – Enforcement of consumer protection rights, bankruptcy
- **Other** – Wage claims, unemployment, workers' compensation, safe working conditions, enforcement of other worker protections, tax assistance, reentry and expungement, and protection of other vulnerable populations such as veterans, the elderly, and those with special needs

Cutbacks in Federal Programs to Combat Poverty



ANA lives in subsidized senior housing and was on the verge of homelessness when she called Essex Newark Legal Services. An accidental fire in her apartment had led to conflict with her landlord, and subsequent disagreements over the cost of repairs culminated with an eviction notice. Ana went all the way to city hall to try to resolve her problem, but it wasn't until she called Legal Services that she finally got the help she needed.

"He took the case and he did a great job. I didn't have to pay, and I don't have to move."

Essential federal anti-poverty programs providing health care, food assistance, consumer protections, support to those challenged by disabling health conditions, housing, and other emergency and subsistence aid have been the targets of recent, severe cutbacks and restrictions.

These destructive efforts have occurred even as poverty in New Jersey has been intransigent. Despite record low unemployment, poverty has not returned to pre-recession levels. Both income and wage inequality have continued their dramatic increase, and now in New Jersey, a person would have to work an astonishing and impossible three full-time minimum-wage jobs to avoid living in true poverty and facing actual deprivation.

Legal Services' response to this has taken two forms. Every day, we counsel and represent clients who seek relief from these harmful measures, pursuing every possible avenue of legal relief. At a broader level, we bear continual witness—and where possible initiate legal challenge—to these regrettable efforts to curtail critical programs.



Helping Our Clients Tell Their Stories



LSNJ's Akil Roper and NJ State Senator Sandra Cunningham discuss the importance of expunging a criminal record.



LSNJ's Anisa Rahim and Al Moreno discuss the need for access to language services in the legal context.



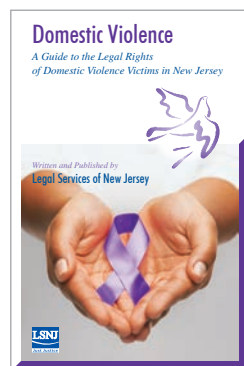
SUPAJEE lost custody of her newborn child to the state while in a violent relationship. With the support of her caseworker, resource parents, and domestic violence counselors, she started a new chapter in her life and regained custody of her son. However, she laments the lack of effective legal counsel for parents in this situation. Greater access would have helped her get her son home sooner.

Supajee accompanied LSNJ's Jey Rajaraman to Washington, D.C. to take part in a panel discussion at a child abuse and neglect conference. Her willingness to tell her story on this national stage is critical to our goal of keeping families together.

"I was lost and empty and I felt like a piece of my parenthood was taken from me."

LSNJ's Essential Legal Information Services

Legal Services' technological innovations enable millions of New Jerseyans to access legal information through our interactive applications, videos, podcasts, and publications.



LSNJ's indispensable domestic violence handbook, recently updated, is now available in multiple languages. It is one of our many self-help guides for challenging legal dilemmas.



LSNJ's "Clearing Your Record Online" toolkit lets website visitors see if they are eligible to expunge a criminal record, create forms to submit to the court, access instructional videos, and find other resources to help with expungement.

Safeguarding the Rights of All, Regardless of National Origin



ALEXANDRO was the seventh of 10 children in Guatemala, where he was forced to begin working at age 6. His first job was carrying water for people in his neighborhood—a job that required walking two miles each way to the river, for \$1.35 per barrel. He progressed to agricultural work and other manual labor, suffering many injuries with no medical care. By the time Alexandro was 12, neighborhood gang members began threatening him with death if he did not steal and rob for them. Alexandro fled Guatemala to live with his aunt and uncle in New Jersey and applied for his green card in 2017 with the help of LSNJ's Special Immigrant Juvenile Status unit. After two long years waiting, he was finally approved and now looks forward to a brighter future.

"My life in the United States is so much better. While I was at the shelter home, I celebrated my birthday for the first time in my life."

We believe that access to justice in this country should not depend upon where you were born or what language you speak, any more than it should depend upon how much money you make. We make our resources available in a variety of languages to reflect the multicultural society in which we live. The Immigration Representation Project at LSNJ assists immigrants with valid claims for relief, including victims of domestic violence, unaccompanied minors, and detainees.

Given the current conditions at the southern border, LSNJ's Special Immigrant Juvenile Status unit, which began accepting cases in 2017, has become extremely important. Alexandro (not his real name) is one of the project's first successes. His story is at left.

Every week, nearly every day, we receive word of more unaccompanied children being transported to New Jersey from the southern border by our government.

Lawyers Lead the Campaign for Justice

Together For Justice

Equal justice for all must be a shared responsibility of all New Jersey residents across every sector of society, not just lawyers. While we look to lawyers for special support, all of us must share the responsibility to secure fairness and justice for everyone.



2019 Circle of Honor inductees, from top: NJ Senate Majority Leader Loretta Weinberg, U.S. Representative Bonnie Watson Coleman, the late NJ Attorney General Robert Del Tufo, and the late Chief Justice of the NJ Supreme Court Robert N. Wilentz.

Recognizing Our Heroes, Thanking Our Volunteers

Over 300 guests were inspired at LSNJ's annual Equal Justice Awards Reception, where four extraordinary individuals were inducted into the Circle of Honor, the portion of the *New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archives* that commemorates those who have played a significant role in bending the moral arc of the universe toward justice. Other special presentations were made that evening, along with honoring the more than 600 lawyers who provided full representation to a Legal Services client in at least one litigated case during the prior year.



2019 Honorees for Exceptional Contributions of Pro Bono Assistance, from left, are Tikesha M. James, Tamika Wyche, Bhavini Tara Shah, Bernice Martina (Tina) Jalloh and Brunilda Bonilla. Also honored but not pictured was the law firm of Reed Smith.

2019 Equal Justice Awards Sponsors

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The annual Campaign for Justice raises funds for Legal Services of New Jersey and its five regional programs, which provide direct services to clients in all 21 counties through 22 offices. Your tax-deductible contribution will help us accept more cases and provide the legal expertise and the access to justice our clients deserve. Please donate by visiting the Campaign for Justice website at www.lsnj.org/cfj.

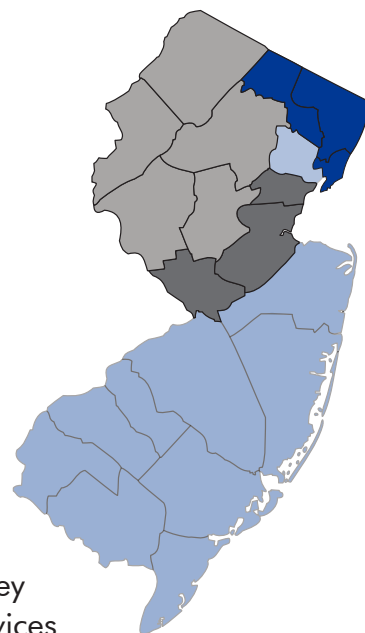


Statewide Program

Legal Services of New Jersey

Regional Programs

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*“If we are to keep our democracy, there must be
one commandment: Thou shalt not ration justice.”*

Judge Learned Hand