

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE AT WILL

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LATEST LEGAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER COVERS NEW JERSEY TOUGH SCHOOL BULLYING LAW

EDISON— Details for low and moderate-income New Jerseyans about the state’s 2011 law designed for schools to report, prevent and respond to bullying by or against students are the focus of the latest newsletter of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ).

The bilingual publication, “Looking Out For Your Legal Rights,” is accessible at www.lsnjlaw.org by clicking on the “publications” tab. The newsletter also is available at all Legal Services offices in New Jersey.

The latest issue spells out the key facets of the anti-bullying law in the Garden State, which actually has slightly more reports of some bullying instances than the national average — generally about a third of all students 12-to-18 years of age.

Schools are required to institute many steps to ensure enforcement, including instituting detailed procedures to deal with alleged bullying acts. How parents may report such instances and be informed on what follow-up steps have been taken are spelled out. In some instances, cyberbullying, for example, can occur outside the school. Beyond applying to students, teachers, administrators and other school employees also are subject to bullying complaints.

Additionally, bullying under the law goes beyond actual physical abuse or property damage. It applies to actions that cause emotional harm, including instilling fear unnecessarily in a person.

The latest LSNJ newsletter also explores when law enforcement agencies have to notify schools if a student is charged with an offense, as well as when schools have to notify police of a student's offense. Under certain circumstances, schools can seek juvenile records, which generally are not available to the public.

Another topic in the newsletter is this year's new law regarding the termination of child support and financial maintenance for dependent children. Generally, unless court orders otherwise or there is agreement between parents, child support ends at age 19. After that, there are specific procedures for possibly continuing some support.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state's Legal Services system, a network of five independent non-profit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for more than 50 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.4 million cases.

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