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**FOR RELEASE AT WILL**

May 2020

**LEGAL SERVICES NEWSLETTER HIGHLIGHTS UNEMPLOYMENT, FAMILY LEAVE, FOOD STAMPS BENEFITS AVAILABLE DURING THE PANDEMIC**

EDISON — The latest newsletter from Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) provides details on key benefit services likely to be especially helpful for many New Jerseyans during the pandemic, including benefits for unemployment, family and sick leave, food stamps, and welfare.

The bilingual publication, “Looking Out For Your Legal Rights,” is accessible online at [www.lsnjlaw.org](http://www.lsnjlaw.org).

The newsletter spells out what’s needed to qualify for up to 26 weeks of unemployment benefits from the state for a maximum of \$713 per week depending on various factors, including time and salary at the previous job. But there are substantial additional benefits coming from recently-enacted stimulus legislation in Washington. That includes an extra \$600 per week through the end of July, as well as additional 12 weeks of benefits for those who exhaust their 26 weeks from the state.

There is good news also for those who lost their jobs because of COVID-19 but were not eligible for benefits under the state’s regular unemployment program. They now are eligible for up to 39 weeks of benefits at \$600 per week under the federal Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program, which covers self-employed workers, independent contractors, some “gig” economy employees, people unable to start a job because of the

pandemic, and others.

Another federal stimulus law change in effect through the end of this year provides two weeks of paid sick leave at up to \$511 per day for employees who cannot work while quarantined or under a doctor's order. That Families First Coronavirus Response Act also provides two weeks of paid sick leave at up to \$200 per day for those who cannot work while caring for someone with the virus or for a child whose school is closed. Depending upon circumstances, even additional paid leave time may be available.

The LSNJ newsletter notes that people who lose their jobs should consider applying for SNAP (food stamps) and WorkFirst New Jersey (welfare) benefits. Applications for both programs should go to [www.NJHelps.org](http://www.NJHelps.org).

The amount of monthly food stamps is based on the net income of applicants. For example, it can be a maximum of \$191 for a single person, or up to \$355 for two people.

While Legal Services' offices are temporarily closed, the non-profit's staff continues to operate remotely, fielding and handling toll-free calls or online contacts from people with civil legal problems. The LSNJLAW<sup>SM</sup> Hotline operates weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at 1-888-LSNJ-LAW (1-888-576-5529) or online at [www.lsnjlawhotline.org](http://www.lsnjlawhotline.org).

*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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