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LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY NEWSLETTER FOCUSES ON HOW HUMAN TRAFFICKERS USE DRUGS TO RECRUIT PEOPLE

EDISON — The latest newsletter of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) centers on situations in which manipulative human traffickers use drugs and alcohol to lure and keep people locked in forced prostitution or what amounts to slave labor.

The newsletter also offers an article showing how the unavailability of certain services during COVID-19 delayed or made it increasingly difficult for parents to get back their children from the state's child welfare agency.

The bilingual publication, "Looking Out For Your Legal Rights," may be viewed online at www.lsnjlaw.org.

A key point in the human trafficking piece is that addiction and trafficking are closely linked as addiction remains a risk factor at every state of exploitation—before, during and even afterward.

The article states, "The drive to avoid withdrawal and feed the addiction will motivate an individual to work for the drug, rendering the trafficker completely in control of the victim." Further, traffickers often build trust and even admiration among victims before subsequently maintaining control through force and violence. LSNJ's PROTECT Project, which deals with

trafficking and many related issues is available for help by calling 1-844-576-5776. The National Human Trafficking Hotline also is available at 1-888-373-7888.

The public health emergency from COVID-19 led to the unavailability of various services and requirements needed by families to regain the custody of their children from the state child welfare agency. The publication lays out the various barriers or delays such families faced during the pandemic and some of the accommodations that have since been made.

It also notes that reunification of the families with their children also has been adversely affected by COVID-19 and its impact on homelessness and housing instability. The article specifically stresses that removal of children by the state from a household because of a pending eviction or “any form of housing instability” is not an acceptable reason for removal of children under state and federal law.

People facing a possible child welfare removal situation or with questions about their rights are advised to contact LSNJ’s Family Representation Project at 1-888-576-5529.

The newsletter also offers articles noting that driver’s licenses are now available regardless of a person’s immigration status, and that it is now possible to change the gender identity status on a driver’s license to “unspecified” and to “undesignated/non-binary” on a birth certificate.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state’s Legal Services system, a network of six independent nonprofit 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 2.6 million cases.

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