

2024

LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY

Campaign for Justice



WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

WHAT?

Legal Services' mission is to secure equal substantive and procedural justice for all economically disadvantaged people.

WHY?

Low-income New Jerseyans did not receive any or enough legal help for 90% of their civil legal problems. Cost is among the primary reasons why they are unable to access legal assistance.

The latest research from LSNJ's Poverty Research Institute highlights that 35% of New Jerseyans live in True Poverty.* This means that a single parent with two children needs more than \$82,000 a year to live. They would need 2.8 minimum wage jobs to make this amount.

*True Poverty is the minimum income families need to afford basic needs, without public and private support.

HOW?

In 2023, the statewide Legal Services system opened nearly 61,000 cases, assisting approximately 183,000 New Jerseyans.

Will you join us? The annual Campaign for Justice raises funds for New Jersey's civil Legal Services system, which provides direct services to clients in all 21 counties. Your tax-deductible contribution will help us accept more cases and provide the legal expertise and the access to justice our clients need.

About 3 million New Jerseyans experience True Poverty each year

The uninsured rate for New Jerseyans in True Poverty is **three times higher** than residents living above True Poverty

A single parent with two children needs **2.8 minimum wage jobs** to make ends meet

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2023 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

In 2023, the statewide Legal Services system opened nearly **61,000 cases**, assisting approximately **183,000 New Jerseyans**.

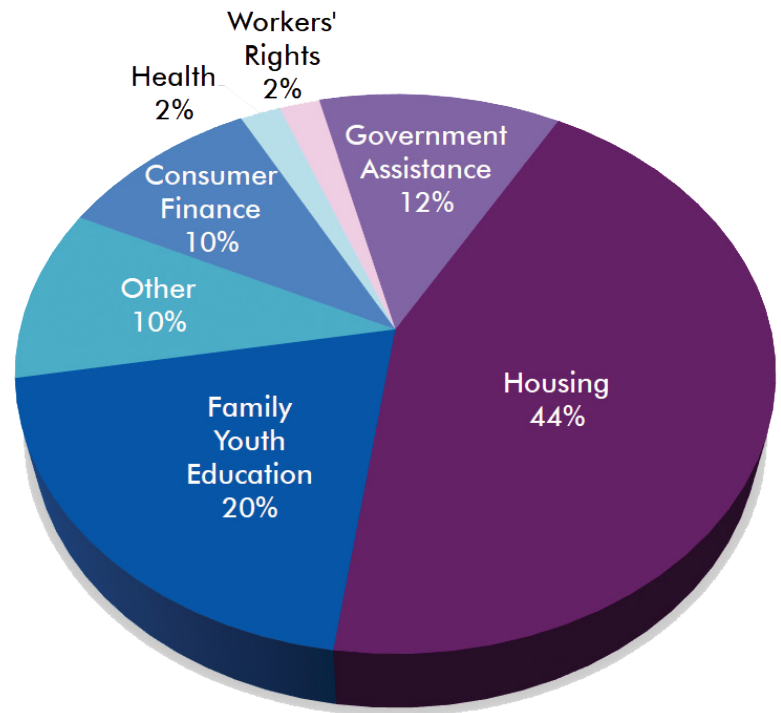
44 percent (nearly 27,000 cases) of Legal Services legal work involved HOUSING.

- **Nearly 700 foreclosure cases** and **20,000 landlord-tenant cases** opened statewide. Each individual case impacts an entire household at a rate of three people per household.
- **Tenants' Rights in New Jersey** digital legal rights manual was downloaded **nearly 75,000 times**.
- Every issue of **Looking Out for Your Legal Rights** included a Renters' Rights feature. *Looking Out* has a monthly distribution of **1,875 print** and approximately **425 digital downloads**.
- **Over 1,000 people** were reached through LSNJ's Housing Eviction prevention and Legal assistance Project (HELP) community outreach.

20 percent (over 11,000 cases) of Legal Services legal work involved FAMILY LAW.

- **Nearly 3,200 domestic violence cases** opened statewide.
- **A Guide to the Legal Rights of Domestic Violence Victims in New Jersey** was downloaded **2,409 times**.
- **Divorce in New Jersey: A Self-Help Guide** instructional PDF was downloaded **57,985 times** and the forms packet purchased **3,020 times** by self-represented litigants.

Legal Services by Type



Interpreters
available to
ensure access

LSNJLAW.org
Legal rights website with
more than 55,000 visits
per month

Serving all
21 counties

STATEWIDE, LEGAL SERVICES HANDLED NEARLY 27,000 HOUSING CASES IN 2023, IMPACTING NEARLY 81,000 PEOPLE



**Campaign
for Justice**
Donate to the 2024
campaign



When Doris fell behind on her property taxes, it constituted a default on her reverse mortgage. She did not fully grasp the severity of the situation until she received a notice that her home was in foreclosure.

Just shy of 80, Doris was nearly eligible to apply for an At Risk Extension (ARE), a federal program that permits homeowners over 80 who meet other health and income criteria to defer the foreclosure process for one year.

Legal Services worked quickly to help Doris document her health conditions.

Her completed application was submitted just six days before the scheduled sheriff's sale and was approved two weeks later, enabling her to remain in her home.

"I have been living here over 21 years. This is my family home, where my kids, my grandkids and great grands and friends come together ... This is where I belong."

LEGAL SERVICES ADVOCATES FOR FAMILY STABILITY AND PRESERVATION

Santiago had already raised four children when his youngest was born.

The baby was removed from his mother shortly after birth and placed in foster care, where he remained for four years. New Jersey's Department of Children and Families (DCF) collected child support from Santiago throughout his son's time in foster care, even as his health declined and he retired from his government job of 14 years. Each month, Santiago's Social Security check was garnished \$394, leaving him in a precarious financial position as he sought to gain custody of his son.

When Santiago finally regained custody, the payments should have stopped. But, due to an agency error, the garnishments continued—even increased—for the next seven months until Legal Services intervened. DCF ultimately returned the overpayment of nearly \$3,000.



"I paid my mortgage for my house and I needed that money that they took from me."

LSNJ IS PROUD TO PARTNER WITH THE DIVISION ON CIVIL RIGHTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

LSNJ Senior Vice President Akil Roper joined co-panelists Renee Koubiadis (Department of Community Affairs), Sundeep Iyer (Division of Civil Rights), Diego Arias (Fair Share Housing) and moderator Teresa Tilton in a discussion about the Fair Chance in Housing Act at the New Jersey Governor's Conference on Housing and Economic Development in the fall of 2024. Implementation strategies and the disproportionate impact of conviction record screenings on communities of color were among the topics addressed during the panel discussion.

Today, **nearly one-third** of the adult working age population in the United States has an arrest or conviction record. Many people have been denied housing because of their records, regardless of whether they pose any risk to their communities. New Jersey's Fair Chance in Housing Act (FCHA) helps remedy this form of discrimination by establishing a process for consideration of conviction histories and limiting their use during the housing application process. We thank the Division of Civil Rights for their aggressive enforcement of New Jersey's anti-discrimination laws, particularly in providing a fair chance for housing for those with records of past justice involvement.

More than
one in 10
people released
from incarceration
in the U.S. face
homelessness

Conviction
record
screenings
disproportionately
impact
**communities
of color**



"We are proud to partner with DCR in the fight against discrimination, in its many forms."

—Akil Roper, LSNJ Senior Vice President

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Every victory begins with you!

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Legal Services of New Jersey



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