



2025 LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY
Campaign
for Justice
for
All



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New Jersey Legal Services enters its sixth decade as the largest provider of civil legal assistance to low-income people in the state. Every day, Legal Services advocates assist clients with matters of life-altering impact—preventing homelessness by defending against foreclosure and eviction; securing basic needs such as food and cash assistance; resolving child custody issues; and protecting victims of domestic violence. Since 1966, Legal Services has assisted nearly 9 million low-income New Jerseyans in nearly 3 million cases and assisted millions more via impact cases, outreach, advocacy, and free self-help resources.



President's Message

This year, LSNJ advocated in several major cases before the New Jersey Supreme Court, including a private investor tax foreclosure case in which the court recognized dispossessed property owners' right to surplus equity and just compensation.

Our annual programming has grown to include free public webinars on important justice issues; networking events to connect and mentor the public interest lawyers of tomorrow; and our Equal Justice Awards, celebrating pro bono volunteers and community partners. But much work remains undone.

Devastatingly, more than 3.1 million New Jerseyans live in True Poverty, below the minimum income needed to afford basic necessities without sacrificing other basic needs. According to recent data analyzed by our Poverty Research Institute, 74.2% of New Jersey households experiencing True Poverty faced at least one civil legal problem in the past year, with an average of 3.2 civil legal problems per True Poverty household. Despite the strength of our statewide system, there remains a vast unmet need

for our services.

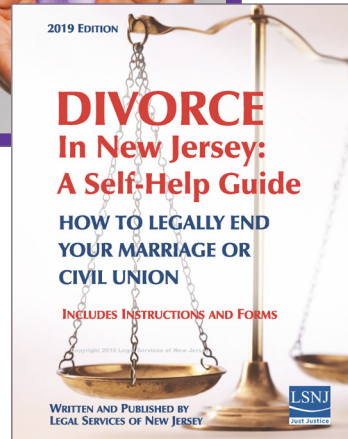
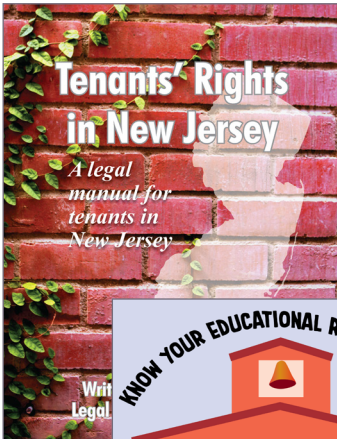
Recent cuts to Legal Services funding and cuts to social safety net programs will further harm vulnerable New Jerseyans and risk widening the civil legal assistance gap. Your contribution to the 2025 Campaign for Justice is more urgent and impactful than ever. With your support, we are able to continue the fight for justice for **all**—providing direct legal assistance to low-income New Jerseyans in need and advocating vigorously for systemic and transformative change that uplifts the rights, dignity, and well-being of all.

*Dawn K. Miller, Esq., President
Legal Services of New Jersey*



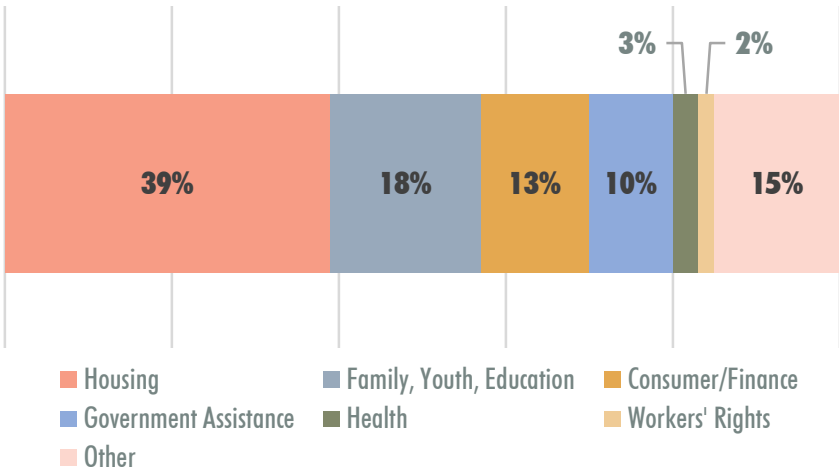
2024 Program Highlights

In 2024, the statewide Legal Services system handled nearly **64,000 cases**, assisting approximately three people per household, or **192,000 New Jerseyans**.



- *Divorce in New Jersey: A Self-Help Guide* instructional PDF was downloaded **47,383 times** in 2024, giving self-represented litigants the tools they need to face painful transitions and navigate the legal system with informed dignity.
- LSNJ's community legal education newsletter, *Looking Out For Your Legal Rights*, delivered critical information to thousands of New Jersey residents in 2024 with a total of **4,480 digital downloads** and **16,500 printed copies** distributed through regional programs and outreach events.

Legal Services by Type



Program Highlights, continued



“It was just like if I had paid \$1,000,000 for a five star attorney.”

— Sharon
Legal Services client

- **39 percent** (25,064 cases) of Legal Services casework involved housing. **18 percent** (11,403 cases) involved family, helping families navigate legal issues such as custody, domestic violence, and divorce.

- *Tenants' Rights in New Jersey* was downloaded **56,617 times**, empowering tenants across New Jersey with knowledge of their rights as tenants.
- *A Guide to the Legal Rights of Domestic Violence Victims in New Jersey* was downloaded **4,005 times**, providing a lifeline to survivors seeking protection and hope in a time of crisis.

Tanisha—Legal Services Client

Tanisha (not her real name) is a single mom with three children between the ages of seven and 21. She has worked part-time in a doctor's office for nearly 20 years. She suffers from sickle cell anemia, a lifelong illness with no cure, with symptoms including migraines and bleeding behind her eyes. She has had her spleen, pituitary gland, and a cranial tumor removed; and recently suffered a stroke. When the disability assistance she had received since 2003 was suddenly terminated in 2018, Tanisha didn't know where to turn. SSA had determined that her hospitalizations were not frequent enough to prevent full-time work, despite the advice of her hematologist to work no more than 12 hours a week.

Fortunately, Tanisha's nurse

practitioner referred her to LSNJ's Legal Assistance to Medical Patients (LAMP) project. LAMP advocates represented her through three appeals before finally winning the case.

"I was tired of fighting, to be honest," she says, adding there were times "I wanted to give up." But her lawyer, Rich, encouraged her to appeal one more time. When she got the favorable notice, she says, "All I can do was cry and praise the Lord." After six years of trying to survive on just her part-time income, Tanisha looks forward to catching up on bills and using her retroactive check to purchase a more reliable vehicle.

"I'm very happy for Legal Services. Very thankful for Rich."



LSNJ's Legal Assistance to Medical Patients (LAMP) project provides services on-site to patients on a range of legal issues that impact their health and wellbeing.

John—Legal Services Client

John (not his real name) was 80 years old when he contacted LSNJ's Foreclosure Defense Project (FDP). He had a reverse mortgage on his home, but had suffered a stroke and fallen behind on his property taxes. He tried to litigate the case and prevent foreclosure on his own, but was unsuccessful. When he contacted Legal Services, John's home was already in foreclosure and a sheriff's sale had been scheduled.

"She helped me out like you would not believe," he says. "If I had to move, it would have upset the rest of my life. It would have been terrible."

John's Legal Services attorney guided him through the process of applying for an At Risk Extension (ARE)—a program for federally-backed reverse mortgages that permits homeowners over 80 who meet certain health and income criteria to defer the foreclosure process for one year. With the help of

"I didn't lose my home and I didn't have to move. I owe a lot to [Legal Services]."

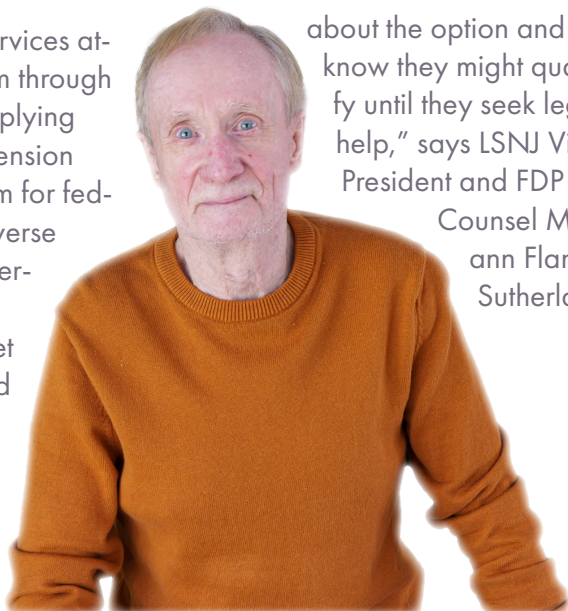
— John
Legal Services client

his attorney, John completed the application and was approved, preventing the sheriff's sale and successfully avoiding the imminent risk of foreclosure. He will be eligible to renew this extension each year.

AREs can be life-changing and a major source of relief. "Eligible borrowers often don't know

about the option and don't know they might qualify until they seek legal help," says LSNJ Vice President and FDP Chief

Counsel Mary-ann Flanigan Sutherland.



Supporting Tomorrow's Leaders Through Educational and Professional Opportunities



form deeper connections and reflect upon how

LSNJ's United in the Pursuit of Leadership Initiatives for Tomorrow (UPLIFT™) was created in 2020 to foster mentorship and collaboration among current and former Legal Services fellows and interns, newer Legal Services attorneys, and experienced advocates. As part of the Emerging Leaders for Justice Initiative, UPLIFT™ hosts an annual networking event where returning participants have the opportunity to

their internship helped shape their career paths.

Now in its fifth year, the impact of this innovative program is becoming clear. Former interns return as staff attorneys with Legal Services and other public interest law firms to share how important the experience was for them, solidifying their passion for using the law to improve lives.

LSNJ looks forward to expanding our reach over the upcoming year through education training for UPLIFT™ members, increased connection through LinkedIn forums, and additional social and professional events.

“The size of your bank account should not determine whether you have quality representation.”

— Avery Goodman, Staff Attorney
NNJLS Jersey City

Highlighting Critical Current Legal Issues Through the Melville D. ("De") Miller, Jr. Justice Series

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Access to Justice in New Jersey

was held in December. Panelists (shown below) provided a framework for understanding AI; discussed recent court initiatives, training, and public awareness; and responded to a number of challenging questions around topics such as security risks, the potential for discrimination, and ethical concerns.

Not shown: Trish Perlmutter, NJ-DCR



Ezra Rosenberg
ACLU-NJ



Akil Roper
LSNJ



Jennifer Sellitti
NJ-OPD



Michael Zuckerman
NJ-OAG

Constitutional Law: A Year-In-Review was held in July. Panelists (shown below) discussed their respective experiences advancing the civil rights of New Jerseyans under the U.S. Constitution, particularly in light of recent federal actions, addressing such topics as immigration, free speech, and education.

The Melville D. ("De") Miller, Jr. Justice Series features guest lecturers and is intended to raise awareness of important social, legal, and economic justice issues.



Ronald K. Chen
Rutgers Law



Laks Kattalai
NJ-AOC



Jessica Lewis Kelly
NJ-AOC



Abdul Rehman Khan
Seton Hall CSJ

Celebrating Excellence at the Annual Equal Justice Awards Reception

The 2025 Equal Justice Awards reception was a sold out event with nearly 400 people in attendance. This special annual event recognizes pro bono contributors across the state, celebrates those who have advanced equal justice for disadvantaged people, and memorializes progress to-

ward justice for all in New Jersey.

Between February 2023 and August 2024, pro bono volunteers statewide donated over 11,500 pro bono hours, or an estimated \$4 to \$5.5 million worth of critically needed legal services for low-income New Jerseyans.



Responding to the Justice Gap

By all accounts, the justice gap is vast and growing. LSNJ's Poverty Research Institute, which studies and reports regularly on poverty in New Jersey, found that, "in 2022, nearly three-fourths of low-income New Jersey households faced at least one civil legal problem and approximately nine out of 10 of these problems (87.2 percent) did not receive any or enough legal help."

Legal Services' partnerships with corporate in-house counsel and private firms help to narrow the justice gap, with programs focused on bankruptcy, expungement, name changes, and guardianships.

"These days justice seems to have a price tag on it. And it only seems to be getting worse. I can't fix all the problems in this country... but at least I can do a little something and maybe just move the pendulum a teeny tiny bit towards justice for all."

— Talbot B. Kramer, Esq.
Freidel & Kramer, P.C.

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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. Please visit **www.LSNJ.org/CFJ** to donate to the Campaign for Justice. For more information, email **development@LSNJ.org**.
Thank you!



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