LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY

2026 Campaign for Justice

Justice for All



President's Message



For 60 years, Legal Services has been there for New Jersey residents who need help protecting their rights, their families, and their futures.

As we mark this important anniversary, we are proud of all that has been accomplished—but we are also keenly aware of how much work remains.

Every day, Legal Services attorneys and advocates work in communities across New Jersey to help people facing serious civil legal problems. A family at risk of losing its home. A survivor seeking safety from abuse. A person struggling to obtain critical benefits. A child with disabilities who needs the educational services to which they are entitled. A patient whose legal problem is standing in the way of better health.

For people who cannot afford an attorney, these problems can quickly become overwhelming. Legal Services can change that.

Through our **Campaign for Justice,** you can help ensure that people throughout New Jersey have somewhere to turn when they need legal help most.

Today, nearly 700 Legal Services staff, including more than 300 attorneys, work through 25 offices serving all 21 New Jersey counties. They provide direct legal assistance, answer questions, protect rights, and help people navigate systems that can be extraordinarily difficult to face alone.

The need for these services remains great. Rising costs and economic uncertainty continue to place tremendous pressure on individuals and families already struggling to make ends meet. At the same time, the legal issues they face are often directly tied to the essentials of daily life—housing, income, health care, education, safety, and family stability.

That is why the Campaign for Justice is so important.

Your support helps make this work possible. It provides resources that allow Legal Services to respond where the need is greatest and helps ensure that access to justice does not depend on a person's ability to pay.

Our 60th anniversary gives us an opportunity to reflect on six decades of service, but, more importantly, it reminds us why this work must continue.

Please make a gift to the Campaign for Justice today.

Together, we can build on 60 years of service and help ensure that Justice for All remains more than an ideal—it remains a promise to the people of New Jersey.

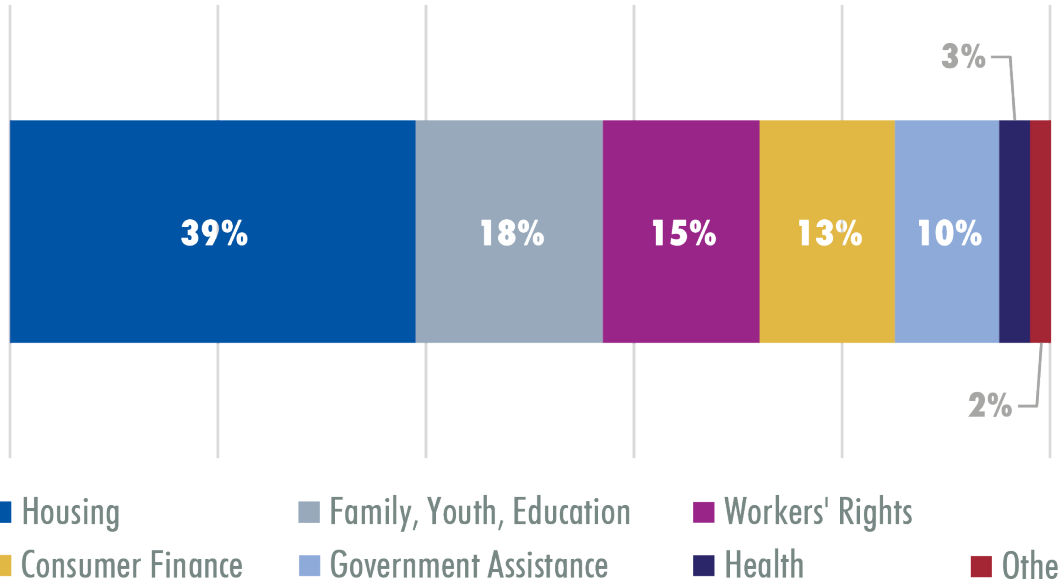
Dawn K. Miller, Esq., President
Legal Services of New Jersey

Program Highlights

In 2025, more than 3.1 million New Jersey residents were living in True Poverty, which defines the bare minimum income required for working families to afford basic necessities, without trading off one need for another or depending on help from the government, family, friends, or neighbors. On average, three of four low-income households experienced at least one civil legal problem over the course of the year. The statewide Legal Services system handled more than **64,000 cases,** assisting nearly **200,000 New Jerseyans.**

- **39 percent** of Legal Services casework involved housing. **18 percent** involved family matters, helping families navigate legal issues such as custody, domestic violence, and divorce.
- *Tenants' Rights in New Jersey* was downloaded **43,990 times,** empowering tenants across New Jersey with knowledge of their rights as tenants.
- LSNJ's community legal education newsletter, *Looking Out For Your Legal Rights,* delivers critical information to thousands of New Jersey residents, with a total of **8,340 digital downloads and 16,500 printed copies** distributed through regional programs and outreach events.
- *Divorce in New Jersey: A Self-Help Guide* instructional PDF was downloaded **31,433 times** in 2025, giving self-represented litigants the tools they need to face painful transitions and navigate the legal system with informed dignity.

You can help make equal access to justice a reality. Give today.



Our Clients Speak



"I am still affected by it. To struggle all those years and then have a life and get it ripped right underneath me. I got it cleared from my name, but I'm still, you know, trying to get my life back."

— Candice

Legal Services client

LSNJ's Family Stability and Preservation (FSP) project specializes in child welfare law, offering advice and extended representation to low-income parents on matters involving the Division of Child Protection and Permanency, such as termination of parental rights; child abuse and neglect; family reunification; adoption; kin placements; and child abuse registry appeals.

When Candice's former partner became abusive, and the car seat holding her son fell off the bed, she called the police. Both parents were arrested and DCPP removed their son.

Candice was promised she would be reunited with her son if she signed a court agreement that required her to take parenting and anger management courses. What she did not know was that it would also lead to her name being added to the child abuse registry. "I didn't even understand the paper. Nothing on the paper made sense to me," she said.

In 2020, Candice learned that her job as a home health aide, helping clients with developmental disabilities, had been terminated as a result of the situation. Because the agency she worked for received NJ Department of Children and Families (DCF) funding, new requirements mandated they run stricter background checks and Candice's erroneous placement on the child abuse registry meant she was let go. Despite reaching out to the hearing unit for her case looking for answers, she could not get any information and was denied a hearing. "It was just a nightmare. ... No answers or anything. ... They wouldn't give me anything until I was represented," Candice explains.

Candice reached out to as many places as possible, but received no responses until LSNJ stepped in to help. Once FSP became involved, her attorney was able to advocate on her behalf to convince DCPP to revisit the issue. As a result of LSNJ's intervention, her name was removed from the registry.

Our Clients Speak



Sophie and her daughter Beverly (not their real names) have lived in their Essex County home since 1967. Facing foreclosure due to tax debt, they began calling around for help until they found Legal Services and Maryann Flanigan Sutherland of the Foreclosure Defense Project. "Maryann was a godsend. She stuck with us through everything. Any problems we had, we could reach out to her and she would help solve the problems," says Beverly.

"My mom is almost 94. She was devastated. ... She didn't want to have to go into a senior building, she wanted to stay in her home."

— Beverly
Legal Services client

Legal Services represented Sophie in the tax foreclosure case and succeeded in securing more time to pay the debt. They referred her to a pro bono attorney for help in getting Sophie's ex-husband's name off of the deed so she could proceed with a reverse mortgage.

"My dad was on the deed and he didn't want to sign off to help us get the loan, he wanted to sell the house. ... After we went to court and they took my dad off the deed, we ... [were] able to move forward with everything."

With the reverse mortgage, Sophie was able to pay off the tax debt and save her home.

LSNJ's Foreclosure Defense Project was created in 2010, when New Jersey was in the throes of an unprecedented foreclosure crisis and experiencing the direct effects of predatory mortgage lending in New Jersey over the preceding decade. Since then, the FDP has represented more than 3,675 clients in mortgage and property tax foreclosure cases, benefiting approximately 8,331 total household members.



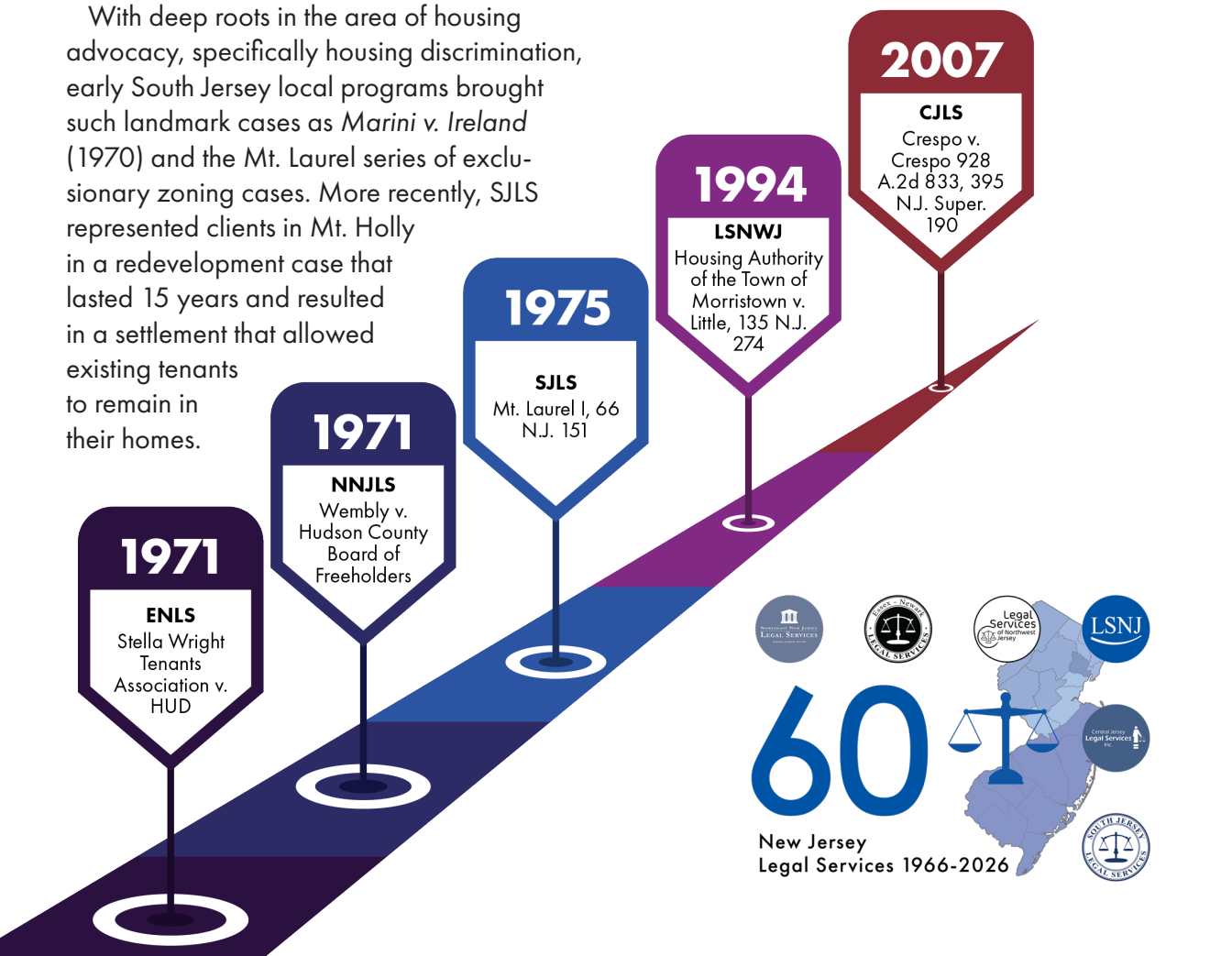
New Jersey's Legal Services programs have been fighting for justice for New Jersey's most vulnerable for over 60 years. From small local programs funded largely through Lyndon B. Johnson's Community Action Programs in the 1960s and 1970s, Legal Services has grown to a coordinated statewide system of five regional programs and Legal Services of New Jersey.

South Jersey Legal Services (SJLS)

With deep roots in the area of housing advocacy, specifically housing discrimination, early South Jersey local programs brought such landmark cases as *Marini v. Ireland* (1970) and the Mt. Laurel series of exclusionary zoning cases. More recently, SJLS represented clients in Mt. Holly in a redevelopment case that lasted 15 years and resulted in a settlement that allowed existing tenants to remain in their homes.

Essex-Newark Legal Services (ENLS)

In 1971, ENLS represented 4,800 primarily Black tenants in what became the longest rent strike in the history of U.S. public housing, ultimately securing one-for-one replacement housing of demolished public housing units. To this date, the county with the highest eviction rates in the state, tenants' rights remains one of the most pressing legal issues facing clients of ENLS.





Central Jersey Legal Services (CJLS)

CJLS encompasses Union, Middlesex, and Mercer counties with varying needs—welfare is the greatest need in Union County, while family is greatest in Middlesex County. CJLS has had many victories over the years, but one standout case involves SSI (Supplemental Security Income, typically for elderly and disabled persons), in which the NJ Supreme Court affirmed that this income cannot be garnished from disabled low-income clients for child support arrears.

Legal Services of Northwest Jersey (LSNWJ)

With offices in Somerville, Flemington, Morristown, and Belvidere, LSNWJ was very involved in representing psychiatric patients in commitment hearings as well as in the areas of family, landlord-tenant, and public assistance.

Northeast New Jersey Legal Services (NNJLS)

NNJLS encompasses Hudson, Bergen, and Passaic counties, with Hudson being one of the earliest Legal Services programs in the state. In addition to countless eviction and public benefits cases over the years, one memorable Hudson County case involved a 1971 lawsuit filed to prevent the closing of a maternity hospital used primarily by indigent pregnant women.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ)

As the statewide coordinating body for all New Jersey Legal Services programs, LSNJ provides technical support and training, leads advocacy efforts, and operates a toll-free legal assistance Hotline, and a number of special representation, social justice, and advocacy initiatives.

In addition to impact litigation in all areas affecting low-income people, LSNJ operates the Poverty Research Institute (PRI). In September 2026, PRI released LSNJ's Poverty Research Institute (PRI) released a new report, "The Economic Impact of Legal Representation in Eviction Cases in New Jersey," detailing not only the significant financial return on investment of Legal Services' eviction prevention work, but also the profound, often life-changing impact of Legal Services on individuals, families, and communities facing eviction across the state.

Your gift helps protect rights, strengthen families, and ensure access to life-changing legal assistance.

Pro Bono Partnerships are Key

Unlike in criminal court, there is no guaranteed lawyer for most civil legal problems. But the legal problems an individual may face in civil court can be just as critical and life-altering and have results which can impact an individual's life and liberty. Consider landlord-tenant court, where roughly 96% of tenants go unrepresented, or public benefits terminations. For people with disabilities, older adults, and those on a limited fixed income this can be devastating.



"Pro bono work helps bridge the justice gap and reminds legal professionals that the law is ultimately about helping people."

— Claudia Rosado, Esq.
Pisciotti Lallis Erdreich
LSNJ Pro Bono Volunteer

Rosado has gone above and beyond for clients in a variety of cases—most notably name changes. For clients needing assistance, this help can be life-changing.

"It's incredibly rewarding to help clients feel more secure and empowered. Everyone deserves the chance to make their own decisions about their future and their families."

— Peter S. Cobb, Esq.
The Wacks Law Group, LLC
LSNWJ Pro Bono Volunteer



LSNWJ's Guardianship Project volunteers represent adults with disabilities who are the subject of a guardianship application. Other opportunities include tenancy and interpreter services.

Striving for Equitable Outcomes

Every client need presents an opportunity for a pro bono volunteer to help, while learning new areas of law, whether it be fending off an eviction or foreclosure; helping a senior with a health care proxy, power of attorney, or will; helping a parent with guardianship of an adult disabled child; or helping with a divorce or a name change. In the midst of unprecedented need, New Jersey's Legal Services programs are fortunate to have committed volunteers who consistently show up for our clients. Visit probononj.org to get involved.

"I can use my legal skills to help an individual who would not be able to afford legal counsel. The appreciation I receive from those clients makes it all worthwhile."

— Joel R. Spivack, Esq.

Law Office of Joel R. Spivack

SJLS Pro Bono Volunteer



SJLS has pro bono opportunities in the areas of bankruptcy, childhood SSI, expungement, divorce, and other family matters.



"As I got to know my clients, I began to see people who were trying to build responsible lives and move forward from their pasts. I found myself rooting for them."

— Robert (Bob) Smolen, Esq.

NNJLS Pro Bono Volunteer

Smolen volunteers with NNJLS's Clean Record Initiative, helping eligible clients seal and expunge criminal records.

Representing, Educating, and Advocating for Survivors of Domestic Violence Across the State



LSNJ's Domestic Violence Representation Project (DVRP) advises and represents victims in restraining order and protective order hearings. In addition, through the LSNJLAW℠ legal education website, LSNJ's social media platforms, and in-person outreach to shelters, community organizations, and schools, material is distributed to those who are unable to access legal representation and must represent themselves in court. These outreach and informational sessions help to ensure that victims of domestic violence learn about Legal Services and are referred for help.

"Once she took my case, I felt like I had a whole group of people taking care of me ... I was really in need of that feeling."

— Anonymous DVRP Client

LSNJ Board of Trustees



"People in poverty are disproportionately impacted by the declining value of the dollar. With your generosity, they will have access to legal assistance when they need it."

— Cynthia M. Jacob, Esq.



"Legal Services in New Jersey transforms lives through its advocacy on behalf of those in poverty. This campaign strengthens our commitment to seek equal justice for all."

— Karol Corbin Walker, Esq.



"Until we can be sure that there is justice for everyone, we cannot guarantee it for anyone. LSNJ is delivering on that guarantee every single day."

— Virginia A. Long, Esq.
Former Justice, Supreme Court of NJ

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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, or a gift through a Donor-Advised Fund (DAF), 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!

Justice for All starts with YOU.

For New Jersey residents facing life-changing legal challenges, access to justice can mean the difference between stability and crisis, safety and uncertainty, hope and hardship.

Why does this work matter now?

As financial pressures and legal challenges grow, too many people face critical legal problems without the means to hire an attorney.

What difference does Legal Services make?

Legal Services protects families, secures essential benefits, safeguards fundamental rights, and helps people rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

How will your gift help?

Your generosity helps make legal assistance available for those who need it most, ensuring that justice is not determined by the ability to pay.

Make your gift today. Help make justice for all a reality.

Your support would be a tribute to the people, partnerships, and shared commitment to justice that have sustained Legal Services throughout its history.

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