

Annual UPLIFT™ Event Inspires Young Attorneys to Advocate for Justice



On June 24, Legal Services of New Jersey hosted its annual United in Pursuit of Leadership Initiatives for Tomorrow (UPLIFT™) mentorship panel and gathering at the Stage House Tavern in Somerset. UPLIFT™ is part of LSNJ's Emerging Leaders for Justice Initiative (ELJI). Since its inception in 2021, the goal of the event has been to provide recent Legal Services interns, fellows, and new attorneys with opportunities to foster meaningful professional connections, both with each other and with more experienced

advocates. For young professionals especially, mentorship and professional development are important foundations for careers in social justice and Legal Services advocacy.

Attendees asked questions to an accomplished and engaging panel consisting of several experienced and newer "Rising Star" attorneys working in New Jersey Legal Services programs. From building lawyering skills to maintaining work-life balance, a wide range of topics were covered. Panelists offered practical insights on

Legal Services advocacy, particularly concerning how to effectively advocate in court. As the evening drew to a close, many lingered to discuss what they learned at the event and further network with peers and mentors. We look forward to seeing what these mission-driven young professionals accomplish in their future careers, and anticipate more engagement in the months to come.

Read more insights from this year's UPLIFT™ event attendees on page 7.

President's Message



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

LSNJ's Poverty Research Institute (PRI) recently released the first of a new series of issue briefs, titled: "2024 Poverty at a Glance: How the Federal Poverty Measurement Falls Short for New Jersey." There were nearly 3.1 million New Jerseyans living in the

Read PRI's new issue brief, "2024 Poverty at a Glance: How the Federal Poverty Measurement Falls Short for New Jersey" at lsnj.pub/IssueBrief-June26.

throes of "True Poverty" according to the latest Census data, drastically higher than the federal government's official but widely-discredited calculation—the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)—which calculated just 859,028 New Jerseyans in poverty. In other words, more than 2.2 million residents experiencing deprivation did not make the federal classification of poverty. As Shivi Prasad, Director of LSNJ's PRI, reminds us, the FPL "severely understates poverty for high-cost states like New Jersey. The hard reality is that poverty remains deeply entrenched, with

millions left behind—a paradox for a state considered among the wealthiest in the nation." This knowledge informs our work and continues to motivate us in our efforts to achieve justice on behalf of low-income New Jerseyans.

This edition of Poverty to Justice features a wonderful portrait of the Legal Services community—highlighting the voices of clients, pro bono volunteers, partners, and new and experienced staff alike, and showcasing the many ways that our Legal Services community comes together in our broader communities—at conferences, at celebrations like Family Unification Day, and via a variety of events and programming such as the Miller Justice Series.

We are deeply grateful to count all of you among the Legal Services community, and thank you for your ongoing support. In that spirit, we hope you will join us— staff, volunteers, Board members, partners, allies, and supporters—as we commemorate our 60th anniversary on the evening of Wednesday, December 9, at The Palace at Somerset Park in Somerset, New Jersey. In the face of significant challenges, shifting priorities, and the shrinking of programs so many low-income New Jerseyans rely on, it is more important than ever to come together in person on this occasion, in community, solidarity, reflection, and hope.

This edition also highlights one of my favorite programs at LSNJ—our annual UPLIFT™ (United in the Pursuit of Leadership Initiatives for Tomorrow) event, part of an Emerging Leaders for Justice Initiative (ELJI). Each year, I am re-inspired by our cohort of summer interns and law fellows, and our newest staff, who bring fresh perspectives, energy, and commitment to our mission. I hope the profile of this year's UPLIFT™ event and attendees leaves you too feeling heartened and re-committed to the fight for equal justice under the law.

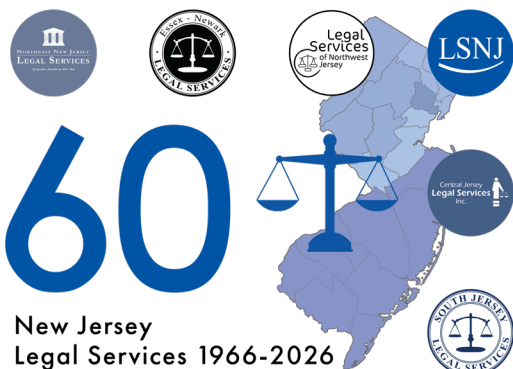
LSNJ Helps Client and His Family Avoid Eviction

Oscar reached out to Legal Services for help with an eviction. He had \$5,729 in rental arrears after a period of unemployment due to health challenges and his wife was expecting their third child. LSNJ's General Representation Unit helped secure emergency rental assistance for the full amount, allowing the family to exercise their statutory right to cure the arrears and remain housed. His attorney also identified and challenged improper fees included in the landlord's claimed balance, resulting in a \$447 rent credit. As a result, the landlord voluntarily dismissed the eviction case, credited his account, and removed the filing from public records, enabling the family to maintain stable housing during a particularly vulnerable time.



Thank you so much, Attorney Herrarte. ... An attorney or any person who uses their knowledge to do justice and to help the needy is performing an act of love and service.

When someone helps others with a sincere heart, that person is planting a seed and brings blessings both for the one who receives the help, as well as for the person who gives it. I am grateful to you, and I hope that blessings from heaven may open in your life and for your family.



SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday, December 9
The Palace at Somerset Park

Visit our website for more details and sponsorship opportunities.



Pro Bono Spotlight—Claudia Rosado



Claudia Rosado, associate at the firm of Piscioti Lallis Erdreich, is a 2021 cum laude graduate from Boston University with a B.S. in journalism and a minor in English, and a 2024 J.D. graduate from the University of Pittsburgh Barco Law School. She reached out to LSNJ in 2025 seeking a pro bono volunteer opportunity to make a difference. When presented

“Helping a client feel heard, supported, and informed about their rights is rewarding.”

with a description of the legal matters, Rosado eagerly offered to assist with name changes for two transgender clients. Immediately thereafter, she agreed to assist on a trademark issue.

“It is always terrific when volunteers contact us seeking pro bono opportunities,” says Senior Vice President Akil Roper, “but it is truly remarkable to see younger attorneys so eager to help clients in need. Claudia definitely went above and beyond to help.”

In one case, Rosado helped A.H., 31-year old from South Amboy, complete and file the necessary forms for a name change application. She met

with the client continuously throughout the process to update them on the status of their matter and to answer any questions that arose. She also filed required deficiency corrections on behalf of the client when it was necessary, due to a previously changed name at birth, and prepared the client for their hearing and the steps they needed to take following their hearing and final order.

“Pro bono work allows me to provide essential support to my community while strengthening my legal research, writing, and client interaction skills as a young attorney in cases that fall outside the scope of my firm’s focus,” says Rosado. Those skills allow her to be a better advocate for the firm’s clients as well. “Most importantly, I think pro bono work helps bridge the justice gap and reminds legal professionals that the law is ultimately about helping people.”

Rosado says working with Legal Services clients can be both challenging and rewarding. “Explaining the law to a client can cause confusion and requires patience, especially when working on issues that cause stress or are time sensitive. At the same time, even small legal victories make a major difference in someone’s life.”

Language Access in New Jersey

LANGUAGE ACCESS AND LANGUAGE JUSTICE IN NEW JERSEY

Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series
Legal Services of New Jersey



On June 11, Legal Services of New Jersey presented the latest webinar in its Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series, Language Access and Language Justice in New Jersey. Moderated by LSNJ Senior Vice President Akil Roper, the event brought together experts to discuss language access law and policy, including New Jersey’s 2024 law, which requires that each State government entity in the Executive Branch translate its vital documents in the seven most common non-English languages spoken by individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) in New Jersey. Panelists included Jake Hofstetter of the NCIIP Migration Policy Institute; Maria Vlahos from NJ Courts;

Ian Fiedler, NJ Division on Civil Rights; and Lina Tocora and William Ryan of LSNJ’s Language Services Unit.

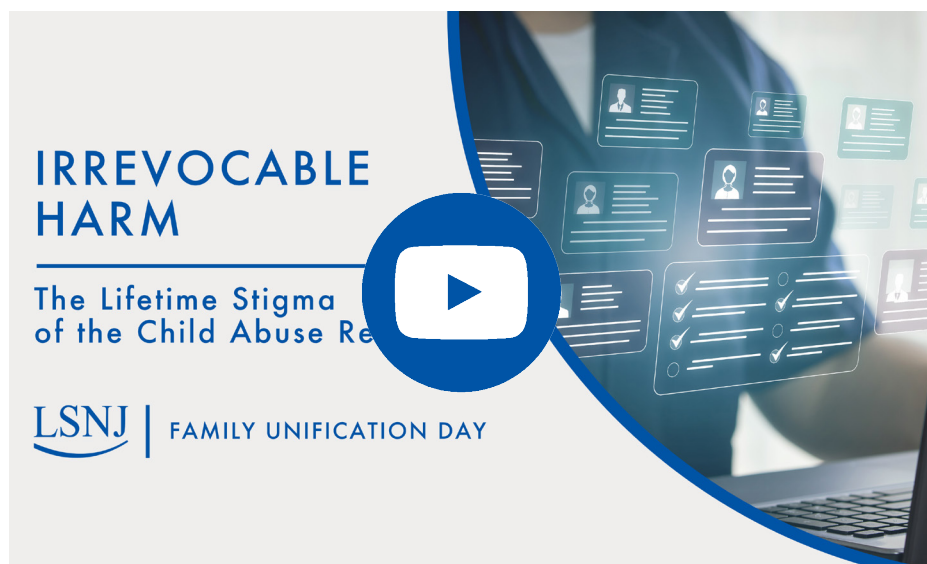
The Melville “De” Miller, Jr. Justice Series is free, open to the general public, and created in honor of LSNJ’s founder, De Miller. The programs are designed to highlight areas of broad social and legal justice that have an impact on the low-income community in New Jersey—from new advocacy or government initiatives to specific issues or areas of law. CLE credits were available for New Jersey lawyers.

The opinions and ideas expressed by the invited speakers, panelists, and community members are broadcast to inform and educate, to expand thought and stimulate discussion, and may not necessarily represent the position or views of LSNJ. Nothing contained herein is meant by LSNJ to attempt to influence government decision-making, enacting, changing, or removing legislation, rules, or other covered government actions, nor is it meant to encourage others to contact government officials with any position.

View other Miller Justice Series webinars on our website at www.lsnj.org/special-events/miller-justice-series.

LSNJ Hosts 16th Annual Family Unification Day Celebration

LSNJ hosted Family Unification Day on June 11. This event, which is part of the American Bar Association's National Family Unification Month effort, honors families who have reunified or remained united after involvement with the Division of Child Protection and Permanency. The "heroes"—social workers, CASA volunteers, DCPD caseworkers, therapists, and attorneys who helped the families reach their goals—are also celebrated.



This year's event video is titled, **"Irrevocable Harm: The Lifetime Stigma of the Child Abuse Registry"** and can be viewed at www.lsnj.org/special-events/family-unification-day.

Conference Provides Opportunity to Collaborate on Behalf of Formerly Incarcerated Individuals



L-R: Gina Quirolgico of Essex-Newark Legal Services; Jim Sullivan of the ACLU-NJ; and Akil Roper, LSNJ Senior Vice President

Staff of LSNJ's Reentry Project attended the 2026 Communities in Cooperation (CIC) Justice-Involved Conference, which took place on Friday, June 5, in New Brunswick. The event was dedicated to collaboration, resource-sharing, and reducing barriers for formerly incarcerated individuals; and included discussions on reentry, housing, employment, and behavioral health.

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Continued from cover



UPLIFT™ attendees were asked,
“WHAT DRIVES YOU?”

Making a difference for clients in their legal battles

Taking preemptive action

The positive effect this work has

Advocating for low-income, marginalized people

Impacting the community

Reinforcing justice

Addressing current challenges

Helping those who may not be able to help themselves

Having a career aligned with my values

Responding to need



www.LSNJLAW.org – A legal information website to help you learn more about your civil legal rights in New Jersey and access materials to help you represent yourself pro se.

www.LSNJ.org – An organizational website where you can learn about the work of Legal Services.

www.PROBONONJ.org – A site where attorneys can learn about and sign up for pro bono opportunities.

www.NJEJLA.org – The New Jersey Equal Justice Library and Archive is an educational resource that includes a history of Legal Services in New Jersey, interviews with current and former staff, and tributes to major contributors to social justice.



POVERTY to JUSTICE

A Quarterly Report from
Legal Services of New Jersey

To be added to the mailing list
for this newsletter, email
development@lsnj.org.

Poverty to Justice quarterly newsletter includes updates on our work, our clients, and our volunteers as we move together toward the shared mission of justice.



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Cy pres awards from class action settlements provide significant support for our work. Checks should be made payable to **"Legal Services of New Jersey."** For more information, email eshulman@lsnj.org.

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