

2018

LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY

Campaign for Justice

*“In the end, society is served
when people are able to vindicate
their interests in a court of law.”*

The Honorable Deborah T. Poritz
Former Chief Justice, New Jersey Supreme Court





Choose Justice

“Injustice
anywhere
is a threat to
justice
everywhere.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Over 2.6 million New Jersey residents live in actual poverty. Each year they face over one million civil legal issues for which they need a lawyer. Legal Services is their greatest and last resort. We need your help to:

- Secure and protect housing for those facing eviction or foreclosure.
- Provide relief and redress from unscrupulous sellers and lenders.
- Gain safety for victims of violence.
- Obtain justice for New Jersey’s most vulnerable populations: children, seniors, those with special needs, immigrants who fled their countries to protect their families.

Unlike in criminal cases, there is no guarantee of representation in civil legal matters. The New Jersey Legal Services system, a network of six non-profit corporations with offices in every county, fills much of this justice gap. We took over 45,000 cases in 2017, but so much more needs to be done. We need your help.

Your gift will help close this justice gap.

Cover photo: Legal Services attorney Angela Arabia-Meyer with her client, Karen, who is featured in this brochure.

Karen

Defendants in landlord-tenant court are unrepresented 99% of the time when facing eviction.

Karen, a retired hairdresser, was paying \$633 a month for an affordable housing unit in a mixed-income development in Warren County when the township decided to abandon compliance with COAH regulations and doubled her rent. “I was stunned when I got the letter in the mail. It was very, very upsetting.

“The township had told us that we were costing them an awful lot of money to live here,” said Karen. “Then, when they had their meetings, they were knocking everybody that was in here that was on affordable housing.”

Unable to afford a market-rate apartment in the area, Karen did not know where to turn. Fortunately, her daughter-in-law connected her with Legal Services of Northwest Jersey, who partnered with the Fair Share Housing Center and Fox Rothschild pro bono attorneys to keep Karen and other residents safely housed. Through the settlement, 13 units were protected through deed restriction and designated as affordable housing units for the next 30 years.



“It’s been wonderful just to stay here. The thought that I wouldn’t have to move again, that I could stay here ... It means everything.”

Justice



“Now that I got the settlement ... I don't have to wear shoes with holes in them. I have a bed that I can fit in.”

Recipients of government assistance are unrepresented in 95% of administrative hearings.

Justice did not have a privileged upbringing. He worked hard to complete college courses before pursuing sales and then a career in banking. He was highly successful in a position on Wall Street until symptoms of mental illness began to emerge.

Restless leg syndrome kept Justice awake all night; auditory hallucinations rendered him non-functional during the day. He heard banging on his car during his daily commute and voices telling him to stop breathing. He even began injuring himself in ways that he could not later remember or understand. Bipolar disorder claimed Justice's marriage, his financial stability, and even his friends as he grew increasingly isolated. “I closed off every door. I hate to think that I was so shallow to think that if I don't have a job that I am not worthy enough to be talking to the people I used to talk to. But I guess that's what it felt like.”

After multiple hospitalizations, four Social Security hearings, and several years battling homelessness, Justice's claim for disability benefits was finally approved. He credits his Legal Services advocate who never gave up on him and is hoping to “bring people back into my life.”

Defendants in foreclosure cases are unrepresented more than 90% of the time.

Cheryl has lived for 69 years in the Ocean County home built by her parents. When she fell behind on her mortgage, a knock came on her door announcing gentlemen who offered to help her get caught up with her payments. After sending \$950 a month for a full year, she received an eviction notice and realized she had been scammed. The company she had been paying shut their doors and the men who had taken her money stopped taking her calls.

A private attorney advised Cheryl to contact Legal Services and she said she knew it was going to work as soon as she spoke with a lawyer there. When illness left Cheryl bedridden, Legal Services staff came to her home to complete paperwork, connected her with other resources to help with Sandy-related repairs, and helped her apply for property tax reimbursements through Senior Freeze, New Jersey's program for senior citizens. She said, "They're like family. In fact, they did more for me than family did." Cheryl said without her lawyer, she would be living in her car. "And the funny part is, I don't have a car."

Cheryl



"They did more for me than family did. And I can never thank them enough."

Helping Clients Through Technology



Legal Services' technological innovations enabled millions of New Jerseyans to access legal information through our website, videos, and social media platforms in 2017.

LSNJLAWSM

The Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) legal information website drew more than 730,000 visitors who found detailed information about New Jersey laws affecting people in poverty.

Self-Help Guides

Self-help guides to assist *pro se* litigants in areas such as divorce, domestic violence, child abuse, and child neglect were downloaded more than 1 million times from the website.

Legal Rights Video Series

Videos in our Legal Rights series, available on www.lsnj.org and YouTube, were viewed more than 65,000 times.

Interactive Expungement Program

Clearing Your Record Online, LSNJ's interactive program created with the A2J Authoring SystemTM that helps people apply for expungement of their criminal and juvenile records, was accessed more than 5,000 times.



Join the Movement!

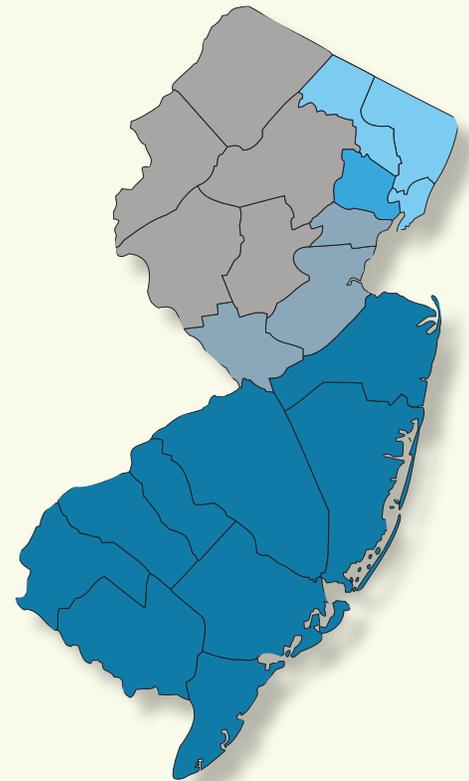
Support Justice

The annual Campaign for Justice raises funds for Legal Services of New Jersey, five regional programs, and branch offices in all 21 counties. Your tax-deductible contribution will help us accept more cases and give people like Karen, Justice, and Cheryl the legal expertise they need and the justice they deserve. Please donate by visiting the Campaign for Justice website at www.lsnj.org/cfj.

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