

NEWS RELEASE

Legal Services of New Jersey
100 Metroplex Drive at Plainfield Avenue
P.O. Box 1357
Edison, New Jersey 08818-1357

Contact: Anjali Srivastava
Contact: Tom Makin
Phone: 732-572-9100
E-mail: asrivastava@lsnj.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NJ Child Poverty Jumped while Overall Poverty Remained High in 2008-2009 Highlighting the Need for Increased Commitment to Anti-Poverty Programs

EDISON – New Census data released today show that New Jersey’s poverty rate remained high, rising to 9.3% in 2008-2009, a non-statistically significant increase over the 2007-2008 year average of 9.0%. According to the new data, an additional 33,000 individuals were in poverty: the total number of New Jerseyans below the federal poverty level is estimated at 797,000, up from 764,000. “Today’s New Jersey data is released in the context of national numbers that show the largest number of people in poverty in 51 years,” according to Anjali Srivastava, research director of the Legal Services of New Jersey Poverty Research Institute (PRI). Added Melville D. Miller, Jr., president of Legal Services of New Jersey, “This serious increase shows that New Jersey must pay special attention to the plight of those in poverty, while federal programs seek to mitigate the effects of the recession.”

Srivastava noted that “Two-year averages for New Jersey child poverty showed a dramatic increase, from 12.2% for 2007-2008 to 13.3% for 2008-2009.” The percentage of New Jerseyans without health insurance remained the same in 2008-2009 as in 2007-2008, at 14.9%. “The health insurance coverage numbers dropped from 33.5% to 29.8%

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for those with incomes below the federal poverty level,” according to Shivi Prasad, a senior PRI researcher. “However, recent cuts to the New Jersey FamilyCare program enacted by Governor Christie may mean that these numbers will be increasing, unless there are efforts to ensure that coverage is expanded, especially to those recently unemployed.”

“Today’s data release precedes a more extensive release scheduled for September 28,” said Srivastava. “Additional data will provide poverty rates at New Jersey county and smaller geographic levels, as well as for specific demographic groups.”

Legal Services of New Jersey, located in Edison, is the coordinating office for the state’s system of Legal Services programs, which provide essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people in all twenty-one counties in New Jersey. The Poverty Research Institute conducts systemic research on the incidence, effects and other aspects of poverty in the state, and the relationships among poverty, work and public policy—and makes its findings available to the public.

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