

NEWS ADVISORY AND RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE SEPT. 15 WITH MEDIA STORIES ON NJ POVERTY STATISTICS

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EDISON— Editors and reporters preparing reports for tomorrow (Sept. 15) on the latest Census findings about poverty in New Jersey may want to include the following points offered by Shivi Prasad, co-director of the Poverty Research Institute of Legal Services of New Jersey.

The decrease in the formal federal poverty rate from 11.1% in 2014 to 10.8% in 2015 is certainly a welcome development. Several critical cautions, however, should be kept in mind:

- This rate is still markedly higher than 8.6% poverty in 2007. In fact, there were 200,000 more people living in poverty in 2015 than in 2007.
- What points to a dire situation is that in 2015 more than 946,000 individuals — about one-third children — were living on incomes below the federal poverty threshold of \$24,250 for a family of four in a state with one of the highest costs of living in the country.
- Even more dire, the numbers of people living in *severe poverty* or 50% of the federal poverty level (FPL) — an income of \$12,125 for a family of four — has essentially remained stuck at the same level for the past three years. In 2007, 3.9% of the total NJ population had incomes below 50% FPL. This number has remained stagnant at 5% since 2012. More than 100,000 additional individuals lived in severe poverty in New Jersey in 2015 than in 2007.
- The latest Census statistics also reveal a decline in child poverty in New Jersey from 15.9% in 2014 to 15.6% in 2015. However, it is important to note that in 2007 child poverty rate was 11.6% in the state.