

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

Contact: Harvey Fisher
Office Phone: 732-529-8430
Cell Phone: 908-616-9941
E-mail: hfisher@lsnj.org

FOR RELEASE AT WILL

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**COMMENTS FROM LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY FOR INCLUSION IN
MEDIA COVERAGE OF LATEST POVERTY AND OTHER STATISTICS BEING
RELEASED FOR PUBLICATION BY THE CENSUS THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 13**

EDISON —the projected modest decline in the to-be-released official federal poverty rate for 2017 is a welcome development, but the hard reality is that poverty in New Jersey remains at historic levels in one of the nation’s most wealthy states, and it constitutes a most ominous trend — lagging well behind the pace of overall improvements in New Jersey’s economy.

That’s one of the major observations of Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ) Poverty Research Institute (PRI), as noted by LSNJ President Melville D. Miller Jr., about the new U. S. Census report. “Certainly any decline in the federal poverty rate is a positive development, but it cannot obscure the fact that poverty in our state last year still remains significantly higher than at the beginning of the recession 10 years ago, when it stood at 8.5 percent. That’s deeply disturbing: data that heralds terrible daily human suffering in our state, with very little improvement.”

Further, he noted, “The federal poverty rate itself is grossly misleading, because it does not account for New Jersey high cost of living, which, as demonstrated in past LSNJ Poverty Research Institute studies, in fact pushes the extent of *actual poverty* in New Jersey to a much higher level – above 250 percent of the reported federal rate. In short, there are really more than 2.6 million New Jerseyans who daily face deprivation in at least one of the areas essential to a decent life”, Miller said. “That’s nearly a third of our residents, including more than a half million children, living day by day without sufficient food, health coverage, decent housing, adequate transportation and other basics so many of us take for granted.”

A family of four has annual income of just \$24,858 at 100% of the federal poverty rate, and \$62,145 at 250%.

Legal Services of New Jersey (LSNJ), located in Edison, heads the state’s Legal Services system, a network of five independent non-profit corporations and has been providing free essential legal aid in civil matters to low-income people through offices in all 21 counties for more than 50 years. Since its inception, LSNJ has provided representation in more than 2.4 million cases.

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