“Where after all do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home - so close and so small that they cannot be seen on any map of the world.”

Central Jersey Legal Services 2011 Report
“Yet they are the world of the individual person: The neighborhood he lives in; the school or college he attends; the factory, farm or office where he works. Such are the places where every man, woman, and child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination.”

Eleanor Roosevelt
Remarks at the United Nations, March 27, 1953

Our Neighborhoods

Mercer County Division
198 West State Street
Trenton, NJ 08628
609-695-6249

Middlesex County Division
317 George Street, Suite 201
New Brunswick, NJ 08901
732-249-7600
313 State Street, Suite 308
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861
732-324-1613

Union County Division
60 Prince Street, 2nd Floor
Elizabeth, NJ 07208
908-354-4340

About Us

Central Jersey Legal Services (CJLS) is a nonprofit law firm that provides free civil legal assistance to the low-income communities of Mercer, Middlesex and Union Counties. Our attorneys and paralegals represent families on the brink of eviction, tenants fighting for improvements to substandard housing, single parents seeking child support or public benefits, elderly victims of fraud, survivors of domestic violence seeking protection from the courts, and chronically ill patients without adequate health care. Our laws and regulations contain protections for the less powerful, but when one party is unrepresented, often those protections are unenforced. CJLS provides legal assistance to protect the rights of vulnerable community members who would otherwise go without essential representation. CJLS prevents homelessness, protects victims of abuse, and helps clients meet their most basic needs, including shelter, income and food.
Small Places, Close to Home

Helping Families Meet Their Most Basic Needs

Jacob was living in an apartment with his wife and their six children, including a medically needy infant. When Jacob came to CJLS, he was working and earning less than $25,000/year. Over a six month period, CJLS helped Jacob fight to save the family’s home. A CJLS attorney helped the family negotiate several times with their landlord, setting up a payment plan and buying some time to secure temporary rental assistance. Eventually, the family fell so far behind their landlord sought an eviction. CJLS negotiated repeatedly for more time, eventually buying the family an extra two months to work things out. As the two month period ended, the family's status was day to day. CJLS advocated with the local housing authority to secure short-term housing assistance to pay the arrears and Section 8 to help them maintain their home over the long term. The housing authority came through with the short term money one day before the landlord had planned a lockout. CJLS' advocacy with the housing authority made them aware of the family's special circumstances, and they were granted a Section 8 voucher. With Section 8 assistance, Jacob's family is able to maintain stable housing over the long term.

When Olivia first came to CJLS, she was very ill, had no health insurance and was about to lose her home. Olivia was living with HIV and was using credit cards to pay for medications and doctor visits that cost her more than $1000/month. Her condominium was in foreclosure. She was living on Social Security Disability benefits, and her income from SSD was just high enough that she could not qualify for Medicaid.

Olivia's case was a team effort by attorneys and paralegals in CJLS' housing, welfare and consumer units. First, they connected her to a clinic for medical care while her health insurance was being addressed. They helped her secure pharmaceutical assistance so she no longer had to use credit to pay for medications. As an SSD recipient, Olivia was entitled to Medicare benefits, but there was a problem with her previous insurer. CJLS worked with Olivia to determine what the problem was and resolve it, and she enrolled in Medicare. She now had steady and affordable access to medical care and medications. Consequently, her health started to improve.

Saving Olivia's home was next on the agenda. Her condo was in foreclosure due to condo fee arrears dating back several years. It was unclear as to the correct amount she owed. The condo management agency had changed during the period in question and Olivia had made some payments toward what was owed. The amounts the management agency was claiming didn’t make sense. Eventually, her CJLS attorney was able to negotiate a reasonable settlement and help Olivia secure Emergency Financial Assistance to help pay for some of the settlement amount. With her housing and medical care stabilized, Olivia's health improved dramatically. CJLS continues to help her address some of the credit problems that linger from using credit to cover her medications. Olivia is feeling so much better that she is planning to go back to work this year.

Sandrine was an immigrant from West Africa who spent two years in an abusive marriage before fleeing to a local domestic violence shelter with her one year old son. Sandrine spoke only French and had a limited understanding of her rights and the protections available to her as a survivor. The shelter suggested she ask the courts for a restraining order, and referred her to CJLS for help. An attorney who specialized in domestic violence helped Sandrine secure a Final Restraining Order, which forbid her abuser from having any contact with her. A French-speaking staff member assisted with interpreting. Sandrine’s husband filed for divorce and CJLS agreed to represent. Sandrine was awarded child and spousal support, custody and equitable distribution of a marital bank account, which provided her with the funds needed to move out of the shelter and into an apartment of her own.
Central Jersey Legal Services has a team of 50 staff, committed to justice and seeing that the law protects the most vulnerable in our community.

Despite the difficulties of the past year, CJLS staff worked harder than ever to help those who reach out to us for assistance. CJLS opened more than 7,190 new cases, providing advice and representation to struggling families and individuals facing life-changing legal problems. In 570 cases, CJLS case handlers helped clients avoid homelessness and secure or protect affordable housing. We helped clients in more than 190 cases to protect their consumer rights and essential property, preserving their ability to care for themselves and their families. CJLS helped families in over 250 cases to improve their physical safety and financial stability, including critical legal protection for 63 domestic violence survivors. CJLS’ advocacy helped clients in 540 cases to secure health care coverage and subsistence income, meeting their most basic needs.

In FY 11, CJLS staff and volunteers provided help to more than 6,150 households.

- More than 14,700 individuals resided in those households, including more than 6,300 children.
- 4 of every 5 client households were living on income less than the Federal Poverty Level.
- In 70% of cases, women were the primary client.
- 15% of clients were seniors.
- 33% were single parents.
- More than 800 clients spoke a language other than English. 94% spoke only Spanish.
- 1 in 4 clients were living with a physical or mental disability.

### 2011 New Clients Race/Ethnicity

- **Black**: 45%
- **Hispanic**: 29%
- **White**: 23%
- **Asian**: 2.0%
- **Multi-Racial/Other**: 1%

### 2011 New Cases by Type

- **Housing**: 36%
- **Family**: 20%
- **Income Maintenance**: 19%
- **Health & Individual Rights**: 4%
- **Consumer**: 21%
# Financial Report

## Support & Revenue $6,303,055

- Legal Services Corporation 20%
- Other Government Grants 16%
- IOLTA 6%
- United Way 2%
- State of New Jersey 52%
- Donated Support 3%
- Donations/Foundations 2%
- Other 1%

Volunteer attorneys provide legal services to CJLS clients free of charge. They help CJLS to expand our reach and the scope of legal problems we can address. In FY11, more than 100 private attorneys volunteered their time to help CJLS clients. The value of volunteer attorney time totaled more than $160,000.

## Functional Expenses $6,270,714

- Program Services 92%
- Fundraising 1%
- Management 7%

## The World of the Individual Person: Clients Speak

“I cannot thank you enough for your help and your kindness in helping me during this hard time. I had just become a widow and my finances had gone. You were a blessing.”

“My representative was very thorough and professional. I truly wish we had more women like her in this world. Tenants always get the short end of the stick, however when justice prevails it is awesome!”

“They made sure me and my son who is autistic didn’t lose our home, and for their help I am truly grateful. I truly have the most respect for the lawyers and the staff. Thank you.”