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February 28th, 2023

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ADVOCACY TIPS FOR FEBRUARY

ONE

OTDA ERAP portal CLOSED on January 20th, 2023 due to lack of funds. OTDA (Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance) is currently processing eligible ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance Program) applications submitted through November 30, 2022. This means that if a tenant submitted an ERAP application through OTDA *before* November 30, 2022, then OTDA will be denying or approving the application soon. Eviction proceedings should be stayed (temporarily stopped) if there is a pending ERAP application until there is a final decision including going through any appeals process. **The Towns of Islip, Hempstead, and Oyster Bay have a separate portal where residents can apply.** See the information below. For the New York State Program, applications from subsidized housing tenants whose rent is limited to a certain percentage of income (e.g. section 8) are not currently able to be paid. State law requires that these applications be paid after all other eligible applicants have been reviewed and paid. Therefore, at this time, none of the subsidized housing applications can be paid regardless of the date their application was submitted. For the Oyster Bay and Hempstead programs, subsidized housing tenants may apply but only to the extent of the tenant's paid portion of the rent and utilities that remain after adjustment by the subsidy provider for changes to household income. If you receive a decision on your ERAP application that you disagree with, make sure to appeal within thirty (30) days by calling 844-691-7368 or filling out the [OTDA online application form](#).

Residents of Hempstead

ERAP program is **currently** accepting applications. For more information, visit [Town of Hempstead Emergency Rental Assistance Program \(lihp.org\)](#). Questions? Call 631-435-4710 or email hempsteeperap@lihp.org.

Residents of Islip

Applications submitted after December 31st, 2022 will be placed on hold due until further funding is available. Apply through Town of Islip: [Community Development Agency \(islipcd.org\)](https://www.islipcd.org). Questions? Call (631) 647-5683 or email erap@islipcd.org

Residents of Oyster Bay

ERAP Program **is currently** accepting applications. For more information, visit [Town of Oyster Bay Emergency Rental Assistance Program \(lihp.org\)](https://www.lihp.org). Questions? Call (631) 435-4710 or email oysterbayerap@lihp.org.

OTHER RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Suffolk and Nassau County DSS- The Department of Social Services has programs available to provide help with receiving shelter or rent arrears to prevent homelessness. Please visit <https://otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies/dss.asp> to find the contact information for your local Department of Social Services.

Nassau Suffolk Law Services, in partnership with Empire Justice Center, can now assist Nassau and Suffolk residential tenants with housing-related legal problems (like eviction) and a household income of up to 80% of the Area Median Income. Services are available through this partnership regardless of immigration status. Please call the office closest to you to see if you are eligible for legal services. Interpreters are available. Suffolk residents west of 112 can call 631-232-2400 and east of 112 can call 631-369-1112. Nassau residents can call 516-292-8100. Feel free to share our flyer in both English, Spanish, and Haitian-Creole

TWO

The 2022-2023 SECOND Emergency benefit opened on February 27, 2023.

If you are eligible, the Emergency HEAP Benefit can help you heat your home if you are in a heat or heat-related emergency.

Emergency HEAP benefits and eligibility are based on:

- income,
- available resources, and
- the type of emergency

To learn more and to apply, [please visit OTDA's website.](#)

NLSL's Public Benefits Unit provides legal assistance to persons who experience problems with public benefits programs that are administered by the local Departments of Social Services, including:

- *Welfare (TANF and Safety Net)*
- *Medicaid*
- *Food Stamps (SNAP)*
- *Child Care Assistance*
- *HEAP*
- *Emergency shelter for the homeless*
- *Unemployment insurance appeals and overpayments*
- *Other emergency assistance programs*

We also assist low-income households in establishing Supplemental Needs Trusts to eliminate the Medicaid spend-down and assist homeless families to obtain rent supplements from DSS to enable families to leave the shelters or retain permanent housing. Suffolk residents west of 112 can call 631-232-2400 and east of 112 can call 631-369-1112. Nassau residents can call 516-292-8100.

THREE

Biden administration extends student loan relief until the U.S. Department of Education is permitted to implement the debt relief program or the litigation is resolved. Payments will restart 60 days later. If the debt relief program has not been implemented and the litigation has not been resolved by June 30, 2023 — payments will resume 60 days after that. The Department of Education will notify borrowers before payments restart. You also may be eligible for loan forgiveness or rehabilitation credit during this non-payment period. You have options. Learn more about your options then call your loan servicer to discuss the best option for YOU. [Learn more about federal payment relief, how to get the maximum benefit, and other student loan relief related to COVID-19.](#)

FOUR

The three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Transunion, and Experian) will institute a new policy by March 30, 2023, to no longer include medical debt under a dollar threshold (the threshold will be at least \$500) on credit reports. Such medical debts under that threshold will never be reported even if unpaid and even if in collection.

Nassau Suffolk Law Services' Consumer Debt Legal Assistance Project provides legal assistance to persons who are experiencing consumer debt problems, especially in matters of credit card and medical debt including nursing home debt. Services may include litigation defense and representation, phone advice, and/or referral for further services, including bankruptcy where appropriate. Residents of Nassau can call 516-292-8100. Suffolk residents can call 631-232-2400

FIVE

Many of our clients are eligible for student loan discharges based on total and permanent disability (TPD). Currently, the student loan debt being discharged is not taxable. If you or a client qualify for a TPD discharge based on documentation from the Social Security Administration or a physician's certification, the date you are considered to have received the discharge for tax purposes is the completion date of your three-year post-discharge monitoring period. However, be aware! The tax provision that states these types of student loan discharges are not taxable is scheduled to expire at the end of 2025. Borrowers subject to the three-year monitoring period who have their initial discharge approved after December 31, 2022 could be subject to the tax unless the provision is extended or made permanent. We will keep you updated on whether this provision is extended or made permanent.

UPCOMING PRESENTATIONS



LEARN ABOUT

LAW SERVICES

This year we invite everyone to meet our staff and learn more about each of our individual units. Please join us at our next sessions.

Learn About Law Services: Suffolk County Civil Unit and Adult Care Facilities Project- March 17th, 2023 from 1:30-2:00 pm. Learn how to make referrals to each unit and what legal cases each unit handles. [Please register for this session.](#)

Learn About Law Services: Suffolk County Pro Bono Project and the Community Legal Help Project- April 19th, 2023 from 1:30 pm-2:00 pm. Learn about the types of cases each unit can handle and how to make referrals. [Please register for this session.](#)

LEGAL SUPPORT CENTER FOR ADVOCATES TRAINING:

Know Your Rights about Consumer Debt and Consumer Protection

**THURSDAY • MARCH 2, 2023
1:00PM-2:00PM**



National Consumer Protection Week is March 5-11, 2023 this year. Nassau Suffolk Law Services' Consumer Debt Unit will be hosting a "Know Your Rights" for consumer debt and consumer protection basics including new laws pertaining to consumer debt and what to do if you have been the victim of a scam. [Please register for this Legal Support Center for Advocates training taking place on March 2, 2023 from 1:00pm to 2:00 pm.](#)

LEGAL SUPPORT CENTER FOR ADVOCATES TRAINING:

Social Security Overview: the Application and Appeal Process

**THURSDAY • MARCH 30, 2023
1:00PM-2:00PM**



Nassau Suffolk Law Services Supervising Attorney Sarah Kupferberg will review the process for applying for social security disability (SSD and SSI) benefits including the standard and appealing an unfavorable decision. [Please register for this Legal Support Center for Advocates training taking place on March 30, 2023 from 1:00pm to 2:00pm.](#)

PREVIOUS LSCA TRAININGS

The **Basics of SSI/SSDI Cessation and Overpayment** LSCA training was held virtually by Supervising Attorney John Batanchiev on December 2nd, 2022. This presentation gave an overview of when the Social Security Administration determines that a client does not qualify for SSDI or SSI resulting in an overpayment to the government. We will discuss basic information about the SSDI and SSI programs, the income and resource limits for each program, what a cessation and overpayment issue is and the ways to resolve it for a client. Please register to [view the training.](#)

The **Family Law Basics for Advocates** LSCA training was held virtually by Supervising Attorney Larry Tuthill, Domestic Violence Unit Staff Attorney Kayla Schunk, and Family Law Unit Staff Attorney Vicki Davies on October 27th, 2022. This presentation gave an overview of the basics of common family law topics including custody, support and orders of protection and where you or your clients can go for more help. Please register to [view the training.](#)

The **Navigating Special Education in New York** LSCA training was held virtually by Danielle Leake, Education and Disability Rights Unit Staff Attorney, on September 8th, 2022. Ms. Leake gave a general overview of both federal and state special education laws, as well as provide a step-by-step guide on how to navigate and secure special education services for students with disabilities in New York State. Please register to [view the training](#).

[Links to all of our prior trainings can be found on our website.](#)

If your organization is interested in having Nassau Suffolk Law Services present on what services we provide or a specific area of law, please contact the Legal Support Center for Advocates at 631-232-2400 extension 3324 (advocates only).

UPCOMING CLINICS, EVENTS, AND LEGAL HELP RESOURCES

We recently updated our Education Fact Sheets: [Beyond COVID-19 School Closures \(Questions for Families\)](#) or [Beyond COVID-19 School Closures \(Students With Existing IEPs or Section 504 Plans\)](#). Feel free to download and share.

Upcoming Community Legal Help Project dates

Our Community Legal Help Project will be at the Brentwood Public Library every Tuesday and the Middle Country Public Library (**Centereach**) every 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Thursday. Appointments are preferred but walk-ins are welcome. To make an appointment or for other legal issues not listed, please call our hotline at (631) 822-3272.

Our Community Legal Help Project March Flyers are in both English and Spanish and can be found on [our website](#).

The Community Legal Help Project is seeking volunteer attorneys with experience in matrimonial, family, and immigration law to give half-hour consultations during our library hours. If you are interested, please [email us](#) today!

Upcoming Events We Are Participating In

Join Nassau Suffolk Law Services staff members and other local organizations at the **Comsewogue Community Resource Fair on Monday, March 13th at 7pm** at Comsewogue High School. [More information can be found on the event flyer.](#)

Nassau Suffolk Law Services will be at the Health and Welfare Council of Long Island's (HWCLI) first non-profit job fair on Wednesday, **March 22nd**, at the **Yes We Can Community Center** (141 Garden St., Westbury, NY) from **11:00AM - 2:00PM**. [To register as a job seeker, please visit HWCLI's website.](#)

NLS OPEN POSITIONS

Are you looking to give back to the community while also getting paid? We would love to have you apply for our currently open attorney and paralegal positions. To find out more, go to [our website](#).

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

we need you

Matrimonial, Family Law, and Immigration Volunteer Attorneys Needed

TO ASSIST WITH ACCESS TO JUSTICE BY:

GIVING 30 MINUTE CONSULTATIONS TO ASSIST OUR
SUFFOLK COMMUNITY LEGAL HELP PROJECT (ALL AREAS)

AND/OR

PROVIDING FULL REPRESENTATION FOR NASSAU AND
SUFFOLK DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS AND LOW-
INCOME RESIDENTS (MATRIMONIAL AND FAMILY)

Contact Sharon Campo at scampo@nsls.legal or
(631) 232-2400 ext. 3368.

A little more about our volunteer needs:

- Volunteer attorneys needed to assist pro bono clients with direct client representation in family, bankruptcy, matrimonial, and elder law
- Provide half-hour legal consultations with our Suffolk County library project in immigration, matrimonial, family, landlord/tenant, elder, consumer, and more
- Law Student / Paralegal/ Pre-law undergraduate internships
- Assist Law Services Staff with intake, case analysis, case referral, and recruitment of volunteer attorneys
- Nassau County Volunteer Landlord/Tenant Attorney for a Day

SHOW YOUR LOVE FOR LAW SERVICES 2023

Show Your Love For Law Services

This February, we are running our annual Show Your Love for Law Services Campaign. For a \$100 donation, you can show your love for Law Services and Equal Justice Under Law by purchasing a virtual 8 x 10 postcard that will include your name, firm's name and/or business name. All postcards will be displayed on Law Services' website and social media.

It's the perfect time to honor a favorite NSLS employee, or acknowledge a unit, or even a special Long Island town. NSLS has been providing free civil legal services for indigent and disabled Long Islanders. We are Long Islanders helping Long Islanders in Need. For over 55 years have been "Doing What's Legally Possible to Create a Just World."



Doing What's Legally Possible to Create a Just World



DONATE ONLINE!

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For more information about our services, please contact me at 631-232-2400 or [visit our website](#).

Thank you for your continued support!

With Gratitude,
Cathy Lucidi
Director of Community Relations

Show Your Love for Law Services

NASSAU SUFFOLK LAW SERVICES
631 232-2400 | 516 292-8100 | 631 369-1112
www.nslawservices.org

Was this email forwarded to you? Stay up to date all year round by [signing up for our Legal Lessons.](#)

