

May 27th, 2026



Where Dignity Meets Justice

MAY ADVOCACY TIPS

1 New Amendment Restricting Employer's Use of Credit History in Employment Decisions

On April 18, 2026, an [amendment](#) to New York's Fair Credit Reporting Act took effect, prohibiting employers from using an applicant's or employee's consumer credit history when making employment decisions. The prohibition covers the full spectrum of employment actions, including hiring, termination, and setting compensation. The amendment carves out a number of exemptions, including those in need of a security clearance, positions that are required to be bonded, position which allows them to modify digital security systems, and more. To learn more about the new amendment, please [read this article from JDSupra](#).

Tips for When Your Insurance Denies a Claim

2

If your insurer won't pay for a healthcare service, or pays less than you had expected, you have the right to "appeal," or ask for your case to be formally reconsidered.

Before you file an appeal, talk to your insurer and find out why the payment was denied. It might have been a simple mistake, like a coding error. But the payment may have been denied for some other reason—for instance, because your insurer did not find the treatment medically necessary. In that case, you can ask them to reconsider their decision, also known as an appeal.

There are several ways to get instructions on the appeals process. You can call your plan, visit your insurer's website, or read your plan documents or [Explanation of Benefits \(EOB\)](#).

To learn more about what to do when you disagree with an insurance decision, [read this article from FAIRHealth](#).

3

Rental Arrears Assistance Programs Available

Updated Suffolk County's Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program is **currently at capacity**, and no new applications are being reviewed at this time. **However, any new applications will go on a waitlist.** The Program will supplement rental housing costs for families of low-to-moderate income for up to 24 months (based on funding availability and lease dates). Please note this is not for rental arrears but for a security deposit or rental assistance going forward. Please visit Suffolk County's website for program guidelines and to download a copy of the application.

Town of Brookhaven Home ARP Rental Arrears Assistance Program opened on October 1, 2025. This program provides assistance for eligible residents on a first-come, first-served basis until all funds are exhausted. For more information and to apply, please visit Long Island Housing Partnership's website.

Town of Babylon's Tenant-Based Rental Assistance Program opened on December 18th, 2023. This program is for extremely low-income households who are in rental arrears to help residents regain housing stability and prevent homelessness. For more information and to apply, please visit Long Island Housing Partnership's website.

Legal Services of Long Island, 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.

Students Experiencing Homelessness- Know Your Rights

4

The educational rights of homeless students in NY are protected by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This act provides homeless students with the right to free school meals and services that are comparable to those offered to students at school. Homeless students are entitled to immediate enrollment in the school, regardless of whether the student lacks the required documentation, such as proof of address. If a child is homeless, they have the right to designate their school of choice. Homeless children can enroll in either-

- (1) the school district where the student is currently temporarily housed, known as the "school district of current location"; or
- (2) the school district where the student last permanently resided before becoming homeless, known as the "school district of origin".

Homeless students are also entitled to transportation services to and from their designated school district of choice. To learn more, please visit our resource page dedicated to this topic.

Legal Services of Long Island's Education and Disability Rights Project (EDRP) is a bi-county project that represents students with disabilities between the ages of 3-21 in Special Education matters, including attendance at Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, Resolution Sessions, and Impartial Hearings. In addition, the EDRP assists students with issues pertaining to residency and homelessness and helps adults with developmental disabilities to secure eligibility and services through the Office of People with Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD). Please call the office closest to you to see if you are eligible for legal services. Interpreters are available. Suffolk residents can call 631-232-2400. Nassau residents can call 516-292-8100.



Funded through the New York State Attorney General Homeowner Protection Program



HOUSING FORUM FOR ADVOCATES

TOPICS INCLUDE:



EVICTION PROCESS AND RIGHTS



HOUSING CONDITIONS AND FAIR HOUSING LAW



FORECLOSURE PROCESS



SETTLEMENT CONFERENCE AND BEYOND



Nassau County Bar Association
133 15th St, Mineola, NY 11501



June 5th, 2026 / 8:30am-12pm
Breakfast will be served!

This forum, hosted by **Legal Services of Long Island** and the **Nassau County Bar Association**, will bring together advocates, housing professionals, and community organizations to discuss important housing issues impacting our communities. Through informative presentations and shared resources, attendees will gain practical insight into challenges facing tenants and homeowners while strengthening advocacy efforts across Long Island.

ADVOCACY PARTNER PRESENTATIONS:



SCAN THE QR CODE TO SIGN UP!

We are so excited to host our first Housing Forum for Advocates, in partnership with the Nassau County Bar Association, on Friday, June 5th, 2026 from 8:30am to 12pm. This Advocates only event will be hosted at the Nassau County Bar Association, located at 133 15th Street, Mineola, NY 11501. Breakfast and sign-in start at 8:30 am, and presentations begin promptly at 9 am. We appreciate Long Island Housing Services and Housing Help contributing their time to discuss their services with our Long Island Advocates. Please register by June 1, 2026. If you have any questions, please reach out to Sharon Campo at scampo@legalservicesli.org.

Register for the Housing Forum

Read the Winter/Spring 2026 Newsletter

LEGAL SERVICES OF LONG ISLAND

WINTER/SPRING 2026 NEWSLETTER

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Victoria C. Oak, Esq.



Legal Services of Long Island continues to make major strides in providing free legal assistance to low-income families across Long Island. This work is especially meaningful this year as we celebrate our 60th anniversary. Over the past six decades, our organization has grown and transformed to become as accessible as possible to the communities we serve.

We meet people where they are: in libraries, courthouses, and throughout the community, and this progress would not be possible without the continued support of the Nassau and Suffolk County Bar Associations, legislators, and all those who continue to stand behind our mission.

We have also tremendously expanded our services, particularly within our Pro Bono Unit. This year, we hosted more clinics than ever before, assisting individuals with bankruptcy matters, Article 17-A guardianships, and advance directives. The program has evolved into a more hands-on model, allowing us to provide full legal representation when possible or directly assist clients with completing critical legal documents.

In addition, we have expanded our Community Legal Help Project in both counties. In Nassau County, we have been meeting with community members in libraries throughout the county and at the District Court. This important work would not be possible without the generous support of our partner law firms and the many dedicated individual volunteers who make it possible.

Our organization has also grown internally, with an expansion of staff, particularly within our Veterans' Rights Project. Thanks to the support of New York State and other partners, this growth has allowed us to reach more veterans and extend our services to even more communities in need.

As we reflect on 60 years of service, we extend our deepest gratitude to everyone who has supported Legal Services of Long Island along the way. As we enter our 60th year and look toward the future, we remain committed to continued growth and to ensuring that access to justice is a reality for all. We hope you will join us on May 6th at our Commitment to Justice Reception to celebrate this special Diamond Jubilee anniversary.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING OUR 2026 60TH CELEBRATION, SEE PAGES 10-11.



www.LegalServicesLI.org



Download the Winter/Spring 2026 Newsletter

LEGAL SERVICES OF LONG ISLAND

Homelessness and Reasonable Accommodations

First Steps for Assisting Homeless Clients

If you have a client who is homeless and seeking housing assistance, the first step is to direct them to the County's Department of Social Services (DSS). There, they can apply for emergency housing as well as city or other public assistance programs for which they may qualify.

It is important to emphasize that DSS housing assistance is temporary. It is not a permanent solution. Clients should be made aware of this and encouraged to develop a long-term housing plan, such as moving in with relatives, renting a room, or applying for low-income affordable housing programs.

Eligibility for Emergency Housing

To qualify for emergency housing through DSS, a person must meet certain criteria.

1. No Available Housing Resources

The individual must have no alternative housing options. "Available housing resources" include:

- Money that could be used to pay for a hotel
- Staying with friends or family
- Renting in a residence when they are made the legal right to stay. For example, an apartment where they have not yet been formally evicted.

If DSS claims the client has financial resources, such as Social Security payments, the client should provide up to date bank statements or receipts to prove the funds have been spent down. Even money for a credit card that note may be considered an available resource.

If a client left housing without a formal eviction, documentation is needed to show why it is no longer available. Examples include:

- Eviction proceedings to the landlord.
- Lease being changed.
- Unlawful conditions, i.e., physical confrontation with the landlord or a condemned building.

2. Residency Requirements

The client must be a resident of the county where they are applying, or otherwise fall under that county's DSS responsibility. This can sometimes be complicated, for example:

- A client lives in County A and works in County B.
- The client lives temporarily with a family in County B, but was born in County A.
- The client lives in County B, but they do not file their taxes back in County A. However, if the client currently has no housing resources, the county where they are physically located (County B) is responsible. They are also responsible if they own property in another county, which could require advocacy.

HOMELINESS AND REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS 1 of 2 <https://www.legalservices.org>

LEGAL SERVICES OF LONG ISLAND

Students with Disabilities Can Attend Public Schools in New York Until the Day Before They Turn 22

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): School districts are required to provide students with a free appropriate public education.

Special Education: Specially designed instruction, provided at no cost to the parents, that is intended to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.

Termination of Special Education Services: New York school districts must provide a FAPE to students with disabilities until (1) the student earns a high school diploma or (2) until the age of 22, whichever occurs first.

A.R. v. Connecticut Board of Education

In 2021, the Second Circuit Court of Appeals decided the case of A.R. v. Connecticut Board of Education, requiring that Connecticut Public Schools provide special education and related services to resident students until age 22. Because New York falls under the jurisdiction of the Second Circuit, this ruling extends to New York school districts as well.

July 6, 2023 NYSED's Formal Opinion of Counsel

In considering the Second Circuit decision, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) concluded that public schools in New York must also provide special education and related services to its students with disabilities until age 22 or the day before the student's 22nd birthday.

NYSED also recommended that New York State school districts "consider providing such services through the end of the school year in which the student turns 22, or upon receipt of a high school diploma, whichever occurs first."

Katonah-Lewisboro Union Free School District v. NYSED

The NYSED's Opinion of Counsel was challenged in New York courts, making its way to the Appellate Division, Third Department, in the case of Katonah-Lewisboro Union Free School District v. NYSED. The Appellate Division upheld the NYSED's determination in the A.R. case expanding the age of eligibility for students with disabilities in New York to age 22.

This information is provided for informational purposes only. It is not intended to constitute an offer of legal advice. Legal advice can only be provided upon the receipt of a written retainer agreement. This information is not intended to constitute an offer of legal advice. It is not intended to constitute an offer of legal advice. It is not intended to constitute an offer of legal advice. It is not intended to constitute an offer of legal advice.

Education and Disability Rights Project 1 of 2 www.legalservices.org

Homelessness and Reasonable Accommodations Guide

***New* Students with Disabilities Can Attend Public Schools in New York Until the Day Before They Turn 22**

LSCA Trainings


Did you miss our past LSCA presentations? Check them out today!

On April 16th, the Legal Support Center for Advocates presents **“Understanding the Family Law Legal Process involving Victims of Domestic Violence.”** We learned how the legal process works when victims of domestic violence are seeking orders of protection. In addition, we reviewed the procedure for child support and child custody. Lastly, we reviewed the expansion of our Domestic Violence Unit in Nassau County and how you or your clients can receive services. [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#) Slides are available on [our website.](#)

On March 31st, 2026, the Legal Support Center for Advocates presented, **“Gimme Shelter Share: How To Challenge a DSS Shelter Share Requirement.”** We learned what a shelter share is, how it is calculated, steps DSS must take before they discontinue Temporary Housing Assistance (THA) based on a failure to pay the shelter share, and the defenses against discontinuation. [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#) Slides are available on [our website.](#)

On Thursday, March 12th, 2026, the Legal Support Center for Advocates presented **“Student Loans 2.0: Navigating Changes to the System Under the New Budget Bill.”** This informative session is designed to help you navigate upcoming changes to the federal student loan system under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA). We covered how changes to borrowing limits and repayment plans will affect current and future borrowers, and we reviewed important information for those with Parent Plus loans. Whether you're planning ahead or preparing for repayment, this workshop equips you with the tools to make smart, informed decisions. [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#) Slides are available on [our website.](#)

On February 26th, 2026, the Legal Support Center for Advocates presented on **“Introduction to Long Term Care Services through Medicaid Managed Care.”** LSLI Staff Attorney Kimberly Bolk introduced home and community-based long-term care services provided by Medicaid that help elderly and disabled Long Island residents receive home care and other services in their homes. In addition, she provided information about how the consumer can pick a family member or friend to provide in-home caregiving services paid for by Medicaid (otherwise known as CDPAP). [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#) Slides are available on [our website.](#)



On October 23rd, 2025, the Legal Support Center for Advocates and the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP) presented **“Student Loans- The Changing Landscape: What Borrowers Need to Know.”** We discussed the big changes coming to the federal student loan system—and how they'll impact every borrower. From the end of the SAVE Plan to new borrowing limits, repayment structures, and forgiveness options, the rules are shifting fast. [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#) [Slides are available on our website.](#)

On June 25th, 2025, the Legal Support Center for Advocates and the Education Debt Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP) presented **"Big Changes, Big Decisions: Navigating Student Loans in Uncertain Times."** We gave important updates on student loans and an overview of repayment options, a review of forgiveness programs (including Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)), and tips for managing delinquent and defaulted debt. [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#) [Slides are available on our website.](#)

On April 24th, 2025, the Legal Support Center for Advocates and the Education Consumer Assistance Program (EDCAP) presented **“Weathering the Storm: Managing Student Loans in Uncertain Times.”** We covered student loan repayment options and forgiveness, discharge programs, and updated you on the latest developments affecting the federal student loan system. [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#) [Slides are available on our website.](#)

The Legal Support Center for Advocates presented **“Introduction to ICAN and Community-Based Managed Long-Term Care”** on Wednesday, April 9th, 2025. Staff Attorney Amanda Davis discussed the introduction to home and community-based long-term care provided by Medicaid that helps elderly and disabled Long Island residents receive home care and other services in their homes, as well as an introduction to the Independent Consumer Advocacy Network (ICAN) and how they can help. [Slides are available on our website.](#) [View the recording on our YouTube Channel.](#)

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

Did you miss any of our *Programs of Legal Services of Long Island* Presentations? Feel free to watch them on [our YouTube Channel!](#)

2024 Annual Report

We are pleased to share our [2024 Annual Report](#), which summarizes the achievements and progress of Legal Services of Long Island over the last fiscal year.

Your support benefited **13,648** Long Islanders by providing access to the legal help they needed to resolve issues threatening their housing, financial stability, health and safety, or limiting their access to opportunities to enrich their lives and communities.

Thank you for your continued support and thank you to all of our staff who assisted in editing and contributing to the 2024 Annual Report. We hope you enjoy reading our [2024 Annual Report](#) and feel free to share it with your family, friends, and fellow Long Islanders



Upcoming Happenings



Upcoming **Community Legal Help Project** locations, dates, and times for Nassau and Suffolk County can be found on our website. **CLHP will be at the Riverhead Library every 4th Wednesday of the month starting January 2025!**

Pro Bono Attorneys Needed

A little more about our volunteer needs:

Nassau County

Volunteer Lawyers Project

In partnership with the Nassau County Bar Association, the Volunteer Lawyers Project is an innovative pro bono program to expand the availability of legal services to Nassau County residents in need. The Project provides opportunities for attorneys to represent clients and volunteer their time and expertise by providing free legal services. The Volunteer Lawyers Project needs pro bono assistance in the areas of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy, Divorce, Article 17A Guardianships, Health Care Proxies, Name Changes, Power of Attorney, and Wills.

Contact: Reisa Brafman, Esq., [516-292-8100](tel:516-292-8100) ext. 3380, rbrafman@legalservicesli.org

Bankruptcy Clinics through the Volunteer Lawyers Project

Currently, clinic appointments are one-on-one with attorneys consulting with clients in person, by phone, or virtually. Volunteer attorneys guide those considering bankruptcy, screening for referral to pro bono attorneys for filing of Chapter 7 petitions. This is a limited engagement, though participating attorneys may also be referred cases.

Contact: Reisa Brafman, Esq., [516-292-8100](tel:516-292-8100) ext. 3380, rbrafman@legalservicesli.org

Community Legal Help Project

The Community Legal Help Project recently expanded into Nassau County. We are looking for attorneys to provide pro bono half-hour consultations with Nassau County Residents. The areas of law most in need are immigration, family, matrimonial, elder, and bankruptcy.

Contact: Roberta Scoll, Esq., [516-292-8100](tel:516-292-8100) ext. 3115, rscoll@legalservicesli.org

Suffolk County

Pro Bono Project

In partnership with the Suffolk County Bar Association, the Pro Bono Project is an innovative pro bono program that expands the availability of legal services to Suffolk County residents in need. The Project provides opportunities for attorneys to represent clients and volunteer their time and expertise by providing free legal services. The Pro Bono Project needs pro bono assistance in the areas of Chapter 7 Bankruptcy, Divorce, Article 17A Guardianships, Foreclosure, Health Care Proxies, Power of Attorneys, and Wills.

Contact: Kiersten Bartolotta, Esq., [631-232-2400](tel:631-232-2400) ext. 3311, kbartolotta@legalservicesli.org

The Suffolk County Pro Bono Project is now on Paladin! [Please take a look at our current volunteer attorney opportunities and connect with us!](#)

Community Legal Help Project

The Community Legal Help Project (CLHP) is a partnership of legal providers created by the NYS Permanent Commission on Access to Justice and the Suffolk County Access to Justice Committee. The CLHP's network of non-profit partners and pro bono volunteers currently provides legal information and referrals, and limited-scope representation through a phone line and brief in-person consultations at public libraries. Attorneys with a background in immigration, family, elder and/or matrimonial law are needed to assist the community.

Volunteer attorneys can dedicate their time monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, or at their leisure.

Contact: Rashika Hettiarachchi, Esq., [631-232-2400](tel:631-232-2400) ext. 3391, rhettiarachchi@legalservicesli.org



LEGAL SERVICES
OF LONG ISLAND

Legal Services of Long Island is a 501(c)(3) and your donation is 100% tax-deductible. Join us in our mission to provide free, quality civil legal representation to Long Island's neediest residents.

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