

Law Services News



MARCH/APRIL, 2020

LSC | America's Partner
for Equal Justice
LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION

CIVIL UNIT PRESERVES HOUSING



John Batanchiev, Staff Attorney in the Hempstead Civil Unit recently assisted a family restore their Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) benefits and obtained a discontinuance of a non-payment summary proceeding against the family.

In March 2019, Ms. J received a Section 8 intent to terminate notice from the Town of Hempstead Department of Urban Renewal for failing to recertify. Ms. J requested an informal hearing challenging the termination, but Urban Renewal did not schedule one. Instead, Urban Renewal notified Ms. J that her Section 8 voucher would be terminated claiming she had failed to request an informal hearing in a timely manner. This notice prompted Ms. J to contact Nassau Suffolk Law Services.

To make matters worse, Ms. J received a notice from her landlord that she was behind on her rent. After investigating the issue, Batanchiev determined that the vast majority of the rent arrears, approximately \$16,000, was Section 8's portion of the rent going back months before the original termination notice.

(Continued on page 2)

THE RAP ON RAP SHEETS

Criminal records may make it difficult or impossible for people to find employment. Criminal records are reported in a person's "RAP sheet," short for "Report of Arrest and Prosecution." So, reviewing a RAP sheet and correcting any errors is an important step in helping a client find work or advance professionally. Breaking Barriers, a collaboration between the NSLS Re-Entry Project, the Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County, and Touro Law School, helps clients retrieve, review and correct RAP sheets.



An "unsuppressed" version of the RAP sheet includes all violations or criminal charges made against a person after age 16. Employers generally only have access to "suppressed" versions of the RAP sheet. The suppressed version excludes sealed items. However, approximately 30% of New York RAP sheets include at least one mistake. This can include improperly reporting dismissed or sealed charges.

New Yorkers who receive public benefits, including SNAP, SSI or Medicaid, or meet federal poverty guidelines are eligible for free copies of unsuppressed RAP sheets. Those who do not qualify may order their RAP sheets from a state sponsored vendor such as Identogo.

Breaking Barriers also helps Long Islanders with criminal histories overcome

(Continued on page 7)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

NY AG Roots Out Income Discrimination	2
Wage Garnishment Protections	6
Public Charge Rules Take Effect	7



SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Pro Bono Bankruptcy Help
- LSCA—FAQ
- Pro Bono Attorneys of the Month
- SCPD Visits Islandia Office
- Help for New Americans
- Project Warmth
- New Ways to Support NSLS
- NSLS in the Community
- NSLS Happenings
- Welcomes, Goodbyes & Congratulations
- Spring 2020 Training Schedule
- Message from the Executive Director



CIVIL UNIT PRESERVES HOUSING

(Continued from cover page)

Batanchiev wrote to Urban Renewal challenging the Section 8 termination on the grounds that Ms. J made her request for an informal hearing in a timely manner. Batanchiev highlighted that Urban Renewal failed to comply with its own administrative plan, which allows Section 8 participants to request an informal hearing within 10 business days of receipt of the notification of termination, not from the issuance of the notification. The letter also made Urban Renewal aware that its failure to continue to pay the rental subsidies until an informal hearing decision was unlawful. It further requested that the rental subsidies be reinstated until an informal hearing decision and demanded that the rental subsidy arrears be paid to Ms. J's landlord. By failing to make these payments, Urban Renewal was violating Ms. J's procedural due process as well as HUD regulations.

When Urban Renewal still refused to schedule an informal hearing, Batanchiev wrote to the HUD representative overseeing Urban Renewal. The letter alerted HUD to the procedural due process violations and requested intervention directing Urban Renewal to issue the rental subsidies and arrears to Ms. J's landlord.

At the same time, Ms. J's landlord served her with a non-payment summary proceeding petition alleging non-payment of both Ms. J and Urban Renewal's portion of the rent. Batanchiev contacted the landlord's attorney to make them aware that he was waiting on a decision from HUD on Ms. J's termination, that Urban Renewal was responsible to continue the rental subsidies to the landlord, and that Ms. J was only responsible for her portion of the rent and not Urban Renewal's rental subsidies.

Fortunately, Urban Renewal finally reinstated Ms. J's Section 8 voucher and resumed paying rental subsidies and arrears to the landlord. The non-payment summary proceeding was ultimately discontinued once Urban Renewal's portion was paid to the landlord.

NY AG ROOTS OUT INCOME DISCRIMINATION

The New York Attorney General's office has launched a new complaint form to identify housing discrimination based on source of legal income. The online complaint portal is available at <https://ag.ny.gov/source-income-discrimination-form>.

In April 2019, the New York Human Rights Law was amended to make lawful source of income discrimination illegal across New York State. The law applies to anyone attempting to rent or sell a housing unit, including owners, brokers, realtors, co-op boards and condo associations. The only exceptions to the rules are (1) one- or two-family owner-occupied homes; (2) room rentals in properties such as college dormitories where all residents are of the same sex; and (3) housing intended for seniors. Not only does the law prohibit refusing to rent based on a prospective tenant's lawful income, but also housing ads that discourage applicants who receive housing vouchers or providing different terms, privileges or facilities to residents based on source of income.

Nevertheless, according to Attorney General Letitia James "landlords, rental agents, and brokers continue to post ads specifying that they will not accept vouchers or housing assistance – an act that is blatantly unlawful and discriminatory." Landlords often target those whose income comes from sources other than employment, including public assistance, Section 8 vouchers, child support, or social security benefits. The Attorney General's office designed the new portal to help it hold these bad actors accountable.

PRO BONO BANKRUPTCY HELP

The Volunteer Lawyers Project and the Pro Bono Project sponsor bimonthly bankruptcy clinics for income-eligible clients to evaluate their prospective bankruptcy claims. Experienced pro bono attorneys will interview applicants. If they determine the case is appropriate, a pro bono attorney will be assigned to represent eligible clients without a fee in their bankruptcy petition.

Please call our offices at (631) 232-2400 (Suffolk) and (516) 292-8100 (Nassau) for more information.

LEGAL SUPPORT CENTER FOR ADVOCATES: FAQ'S

Advocate's Question: *My client and I are having a hard time getting documents the Department of Social Services (DSS) is requesting. I'm afraid his case may be closed for failure to submit documents. What can we do?*

LSCA's Answer: Community advocates who call the Legal Support Center are often caught up in the long and arduous process of documenting a public assistance application for a client. Applicants and recipients of public assistance are required to provide extensive paperwork to prove eligibility factors such as address or citizenship. But, each factor may be documented in a number of ways. DSS should provide the client with the DSS Documentation Requirement Guide, which lists alternate documents that are acceptable proof of each eligibility factor. The DSS worker must inform a client who is having trouble getting a particular document of alternate documents that can be used instead. It is important that an applicant tell the worker in writing that he or she is experiencing difficulty in getting a particular document and request suggestions for an alternate document that would be acceptable.

Administrative Directive 93 ADM-20 provides legal authority explaining DSS's obligations. The ADM informs the local DSS that they must use the mandated Documentation Requirement Guide for substitute documents where verification is difficult for the client. It also reminds workers that benefits may not be terminated nor a case denied for failure to provide a specific item of documentation (e.g. birth certificate) as long as the eligibility factor in question is established. For example, "an application may be denied if the applicant is unwilling to provide sufficient proof of identity, age, citizenship, etc., but not for failure to provide a birth certificate or other specific item of documentation" 93 ADM-20. Applicants can also request additional time to gather documents especially when they are experiencing delay or difficulties. 18 NYCRR 351.8b For an ongoing recipient of public assistance who is recertifying and having problems, the recipient may request an extension if he establishes good cause for the delay. 18 NYCRR

351.26. It is strongly suggested that requests for extensions be made **in writing** and that you keep a copy for the client's records.

If an advocate or client has done their best to gather the documents, but is still having problems, they should request **in writing** that the DSS worker assist the client. The state regulation, 18 NYCRR Section 351.5, requires DSS to assist in this process when necessary ("collateral assistance"). This help can be in the form of payment for fees (e.g. bank statements), communicating with an uncooperative third party (landlord, relative, etc.), or contacting another agency on the applicant's behalf to secure a document (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, Social Security, Bureau of Vital Statistics).

In summary, the worker should inform the individual of the substitute documents that would be acceptable or assist in obtaining the information if informed that it would be difficult or impossible for the applicant on his own to obtain the information in a timely manner. If a client has written proof that he asked for help in the documentation process and his application is denied for failure to verify or document, he is likely to have a strong case at a fair hearing. Documents can even be brought in as late as the fair hearing itself and must be accepted at that time, although it is obviously more advantageous to provide documents on a timely basis.

The most important goal is to keep the application active. Avoid stopping and restarting the already complicated and protracted application process. Alert the worker to documentation difficulties and hopefully such assistance will help to move things along. If not, remember to request a fair hearing and call Nassau Suffolk Law Services for assistance!

Please remember to call the Legal Support Center for Advocates for questions like this or any other of your legal questions at 631 232-2400 ext. 3309 or 3324. The Legal Support Center for Advocates is a service for Long Island's "helping" community.

PRO BONO ATTORNEYS OF THE MONTH

BYRON DIVINS



Attorney Byron Divins has demonstrated tremendous dedication assisting low-income Nassau County residents in matrimonial matters, especially those with complex child support and custody issues. Since first joining the Volunteer Lawyers Project panel in

2012, Divins and his Garden City firm of Divins & Divins, P.C., has represented twenty-three pro bono clients, including nine contested divorce proceedings.

Divins concentrates his practice on family and criminal law, representing clients in Nassau, Suffolk, New York, Kings and Queens counties on issues varying from orders of protection, divorce, custody, visitation, child support and modification. His firm-wide commitment to pro bono means that each attorney there has graciously agreed to represent at least one matrimonial VLP client at any given time!

Divins takes great pride in his deeply rooted belief in service to his community. In fact, it was the concept of service to his fellow citizens that initially inspired him seek out pro bono work. When he first joined the VLP in 2012, Divins volunteered with the Landlord Tenant Attorney of the Day Program, which he found to be an excellent training experience. When he learned of the great need for matrimonial pro bono attorneys, he committed to using his expertise in that area.

One particularly rewarding matrimonial matter involved a defendant wife, a recent immigrant who was brought to this country by her husband. She and her children lived with her spouse in his parents' house, where she was subjected to verbal abuse and treated like an indentured servant. When she resisted this treatment, her husband served her with divorce papers. Divins helped her to secure a satisfactory settlement, child support and custody arrangements. Due to his assistance, she was able to secure sufficient resources to move out and move forward in her life, establish a career and care for her children.

Divins emphasizes that the greatest reward asso-

ciated with providing pro bono service is the unique opportunity to help marginalized members of the community gain access to justice. "My commitment to assisting at least one marginalized member of the community at all times allows me to do my part to increase access to justice for low-income Nassau County residents," states Divins. "After all, the secret to living is giving."

Divins graduated from SUNY Albany in 1993, and Touro Law School in 1996. Upon earning his J.D., he joined the U.S. Navy, where he spent thirteen years on active duty serving as a prosecutor, defense counsel and advisor to commanding officers throughout the world.

According to Susan Biller, Pro Bono Coordinator of the VLP, Divins "is one of those rare volunteers who can be counted on to take on the most challenged clients and contentiously contested matters. He brings his enthusiasm and passion for achieving justice to every case he handles. We are incredibly fortunate to be able to rely on him to assist our most needy clients."

PETER CONNELLY



Peter Connelly has been volunteering at NSLS's offices as a pro bono call screener for over a year. He is an extremely dedicated volunteer, who logged almost 300 hours of pro bono volunteering in 2019 alone!

Working with his father and several attorneys at the Connelly and Connelly law firm, Connelly handled personal injury trials. One of Connelly's most notable cases involved a 9-year-old boy who suffered a leg amputation at a LIRR station. Peter won a substantial damages award for this little boy. At the time, it was the largest verdict ever received in Suffolk County. Connelly's father passed away a few years ago and Peter is now semi-retired from the practice of law.

Connelly has become a part of our Pro Bono team of screeners who return the calls from the hundreds of folks who reach out to our office on

(Continued on page 5)

PETER CONNELLY (Continued from page 4)

a monthly basis. We receive calls for all manner of legal assistance, and even sometimes non-legal assistance. It falls to Peter and the other volunteer screeners who show up to our office each week to sift through the dozens of calls to determine financial eligibility for pro bono services or for one of the other services at NSLS. Once financial eligibility is determined, they must then establish how best to meet the caller’s legal needs. If Pro Bono or NSLS services are not appropriate or available, our volunteers will refer the caller to another agency or the Suffolk County Bar Association.

It is stalwart volunteers like Connelly who assist in the detangling and prioritizing of these issues. We are so grateful for his expertise and his loyal and dedicated assistance.



HARVEY SAVITT



Harvey Savitt has been a hard-working member of the Suffolk County Pro Bono Project (PBP) since 1992. Currently, Harvey primarily handles pro bono divorces for the PBP, but he also

provides assistance on guardianship and child support cases when needed.

Savitt opened his own practice in 1980 and has been a partner in the firm of Savitt & Krantz, P.C., since 2003. Over the years, he has taken on many complicated matrimonial cases for the PBP. One case involved a spouse who had left the state. There was extensive motion practice on the issue of substitute service and to compel the Department of Social Services to produce records relating to the spouse’s whereabouts. Savitt wound up hiring both an investigator and a private process service. His persistence paid off. After logging 66 pro bono hours over the course of several years, he was ultimately successful in obtaining a divorce for our very grateful client.

Savitt has never been one to turn away difficult cases, representing both veterans and domestic violence victims. Savitt also took a case that

his Rabbi referred to him. This case is a perfect example of what we refer to as a “reverse referral.” A reverse referral is a case where a pro bono attorney meets a person who needs legal assistance but cannot afford to pay. This person can be referred to the PBP and, after financial eligibility is determined, the case will be certified as a pro bono case to track Suffolk County’s pro bono statistics and to grant CLE credit to the attorney. In Savitt’s case, after our thorough screening process was conducted, PBP determined that this member of Savitt’s synagogue was eligible for our services. Harvey represented this client in both a custody trial and motion practice relating to an upward modification of child support. Though Harvey was not paid for his hours of work, he did receive both CLE credit and a voucher for a CLE course from the Suffolk County Bar Association. The Suffolk County legal community also gets credit for its pro bono contributions as these statistics are formally included in NSLS’ reports to the NYS Office of Court Administration, the IOLA fund and the Legal Services Corporation.

Savitt’s heroic pro bono work extends beyond the PBP as well. For example, he has also worked with Trial Lawyers Care, which provided pro bono representation to 9/11 victims. In one personal injury case, his client had been injured carrying someone out of the World Trade Center. When compensation was denied, Harvey appealed to the special master of the federal September 11th Compensation Fund. Within a week and a half of the denial, the decision was reversed and his client received over \$400,000.

.....

• The **Suffolk Pro Bono Project** and Nassau’s **Volunteer Lawyers Project** work in cooperation with our local bar associations toward the goal of providing free legal assistance to Long Island residents who are dealing with severe economic hardship.

• **If you would like to volunteer, please contact:**
 • **Carolyn McQuade, Esq. at 631 232-2400,**
 • **Susan Biller, Esq. at 516 292-8299, or**
 • **Roberta Scoll, Esq. 516 292-8100**
 • **(Landlord/tenant Attorney of the Day Project).**

• Read more about our other [Pro Bono Champions](#) on our website.

.....

WAGE GARNISHMENT PROTECTIONS

As of January 2020, the minimum wage on Long Island is \$13 per hour. With this increase, the amount of disposable income exempt from garnishment to pay a private debt is now \$390 per week. “Disposable income” means income after deductions required by law, such as taxes or Social Security. Other non-mandatory payroll deductions such as health insurance premiums still count towards disposable income.

This means that clients with employment incomes less than \$390 per week are **exempt** from private debt collection. (30 hours x \$13 (minimum wage) = \$390 a week (after taxes). CPLR §5231. The frozen bank account exemption increased to \$3,120 (240 x \$13). CPLR 5222 (i).

For those with higher incomes, the limits on garnishment are as follows: The lesser of (1) 10% of gross income or (2) 25% of disposable income. However, disposable income cannot be reduced to less than \$390 per week.

In addition, many types of income, including disability income and child support, remain exempt. Check LawHelpNY.org for more information about limits on debt collection.

EXEMPT INCOME \$390 WEEK



30 hours x \$13
(minimum wage)

\$3,120 FROZEN BANK ACCOUNT

240 hours x \$13
(minimum wage)



FUNDS AVAILABLE TO PREVENT HOMELESSNESS

Haven House/Bridges Homelessness Prevention Program helps people avoid eviction and retain or obtain permanent housing. The program also provide supportive services to people who are experiencing homelessness.

The program offers people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness with financial and rental assistance related to maintaining permanent housing such as moving or storage fees, rental or utility arrears, security deposits, rent and utility payments. For more information please contact HHB’s Homelessness Prevention Program at 631 231-3619.

.....

NEW YORK BAR FOUNDATION SUPPORTS COMMUNITY LEGAL HELP PROJECT



Nassau Suffolk Law Services thanks the New York Bar Foundation for its generous support of the Community Legal Help Project. The Community Legal Help Project (CLHP) offers residents of Suffolk County limited legal services and consultations at public libraries. The new grant funds will help NSLS and the Suffolk County Justice for All Initiative continue to expand access to justice.

Visit <https://www.nslawservices.org/community-resources> for more information about the CLHP or call 631-822-3272 to schedule a consultation.



SCPD VISITS ISLANDIA OFFICE

As part of our continuing efforts to connect with our community, NSLS recently invited Suffolk County Deputy Police Commissioner Risco Mention-Lewis to visit our Islandia offices. She met with our staff to discuss NSLS’s services and how our offices could work together, especially in the areas of landlord-tenant, domestic violence and re-entry cases.



PUBLIC CHARGE RULES TAKE EFFECT

“Public charge” is an immigration concept that refers to people who are not eligible to become U.S. permanent residents because they are considered likely to become dependent on public benefits.

In 2019, the definition of “public charge” was expanded to include recipients of non-cash assistance such as SNAP and federally-funded Medicaid. The new rules were subject to nationwide-injunction until January 2020. After the U.S. Supreme Court lifted the injunctions, the revised Public Charge rules went into effect for immigration applications and petitions post-marked after February 24, 2020.

The new rules **DO NOT** apply to:

- Citizens
- Anyone applying for naturalization
- Anyone with a Green Card (unless they are traveling outside of the U.S. for more than 180 days or if they have a criminal conviction)
- Refugees and asylees
- Special Immigrant Juveniles (SIJ)
- VAWA, U, and T Visa applicants

Protecting Immigrant Families has a number of resources for clients who are concerned about whether the new rules apply to them. <https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/>

THE RAP ON RAP SHEETS

(Continued from page 1)

obstacles to employment through Certificates of Good Conduct and Certificates of Relief from Disabilities. While New York does not allow expungement of a criminal record (with limited exceptions for marijuana convictions), these certificates allow people with dated criminal histories obtain educational degrees or professional licenses. New York has over 100 educational licenses, including everything from barbers and commercial drivers to x-ray technicians and real estate agents. A Certificate may also be necessary to qualify for a civil servant position.

A Certificate of Relief from Disabilities allows a person with no more than ONE felony conviction or an unlimited number of misdemeanor convictions to obtain a New York educational license, as long as they were not sentenced to “upstate” prison time. The client must file a one-page application for the certificate in each court of conviction. Once filed, the probation department from that jurisdiction will contact the client for an interview. The decision to issue the certificate is ultimately in the discretion of the court of conviction.

Clients with more serious criminal histories and those applying for positions in public office (including NYC police or firefighters) need to apply for a Certificate of Good Conduct. The application and review process for this certificate is considerably more involved. It includes a longer application, a homestudy, and an evaluation of employment, cohabitation and residential history. Any omissions in the application may result in new criminal charges. There is also a waiting period of three to five years from the most recent conviction.

Contact the NSLS Re-Entry Project or Breaking Barriers for more information or assistance! Breaking Barriers website is <http://sclas.org/breaking-barriers/>.

HELP FOR NEW AMERICANS!

The Suffolk Citizenship Project is a partnership of the Suffolk County Bar Association and NSLS. The program helps low-income Green Card holders (legal permanent residents) apply for citizenship. Call 631-822-3282 for eligibility!



PROJECT WARMTH

Do your clients need extra help keeping warm?

Project Warmth is a non-governmental emergency fuel fund. It provides one-time grants for fuel or electricity used for heat. Assistance comes through direct payments to oil and utility companies. Project Warmth grants can be used to get an oil delivery or to cover arrears.

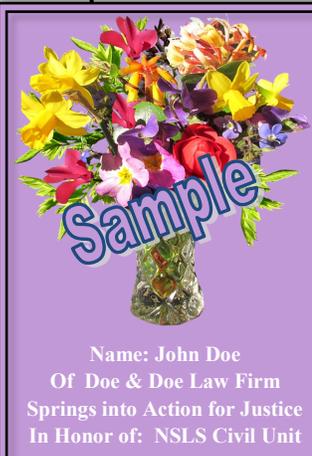
Eligibility criteria include:

- Residency in Nassau County, Suffolk County or the Rockaway area in Queens.
- Heating or fuel-related electric bill in applicant’s name and residential address.
- Terminated or severely overdue account, or the applicant must be unable to afford a re-fill when a fuel tank is near empty (1/4 tank or less).
- Demonstrate financial hardship and provide an acceptable explanation for arrears.

- Assistance available only once each program year. Clients who received assistance in a previous year may be ineligible.
 - HEAP eligible clients must apply to Emergency HEAP before Project Warmth.
- To apply call 211 or 888-774-7633, 7 days a week, between 9:00am to 5:00pm.

Additional energy assistance is available from PSEG Long Island’s Household Assistance Program (HAP). Contact consumeradvocacyli@pseg.com to learn about monthly electricity savings for recipients of SNAP, SSI, Medicaid or HEAP.

National Grid customers with low incomes should call (800) 930-5003 for information about monthly bill credits from their Energy Affordability Program (EAP).



Name: John Doe
Of Doe & Doe Law Firm
Springs into Action for Justice
In Honor of: NSLS Civil Unit

MANY NEW WAYS TO SUPPORT THE WORK WE DO

* SPRING INTO ACTION FOR JUSTICE *



Please consider purchasing a digital vase of flowers for \$100. Each digital 8 x 10 print of the vase of flowers will include your name, your firm/business/agency name and a special note you desire.

This is also a great way to acknowledge your favorite NSLS Unit/Employee. The digital prints will be hung in the waiting rooms of all 3 NSLS offices from March through May. Help us to continue to “Do What’s Legally Possible to Create a Just World”! Please make checks made payable to Nassau Suffolk Law Services.

Name : _____

Firm/Agency Name: _____

Check in the amount of: \$ _____ enclosed for: _____ vase(s) of flowers (\$100 per vase).

In honor of: _____

Pease circle one: Visa Mastercard American Express

Card No.: _____ Exp. Date: _____ CVV: _____

Billing Address: _____

I authorize Nassau Suffolk Law Services to charge the above account a total of: \$ _____

Signature: _____

Please mail this form with your payment to :
Catherine Lucidi, Director of Community Relations,
Nassau Suffolk Law Services
1757 Veterans Memorial Highway
Suite 50,
Islandia, New York 11749

AMAZON SMILES—please consider picking Nassau Suffolk Law Services as your charity when shopping on Amazon Smile. A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Law Services (at no extra cost to you).

RECURRING DONATIONS –Why not donate all year long? You pick the amount and the frequency, and you set up the recurring donations on line . No amount is too small. [Wwww.nsllawservices.org](http://www.nsllawservices.org)

LAW SERVICES IN OUR COMMUNITY

NSLS continues its strong ties within the community in an effort to collaborate with various agencies and ensure that low income Long Islanders receive the services they so desperately need. If you happen to see any of our NSLS staff at a community event, please stop by to introduce yourself and say hello. We'd love to meet you, and as always we thank you for your support!



On January 28, 2020, **Erika Ver-rill**, Staff Attorney in the Adult Home Rights Project attended the Resident Council Meeting held and gave a training to the residents of Amber Court of Westbury. Verrill explained the legal rights of adult home residents and distributed the Adult Home Rights booklet. VerRill also stayed on site to provide individual consultations with residents.

On January 23, 2020, **Ray DeLeo**, Staff Attorney in the Re-Entry Project, held a RAP Sheet clinic for Nassau Family and Children's Association staff and clients in NSLS's Hempstead Office.



Ray reviewed the areas of law our Re-Entry Project can assist with. He also discussed Correction Law 23A, the sex offender registration act modification and relief proceedings, and child support. In addition, clients were able to be fingerprinted and request their NYS RAP sheet for review.

On January 23, 2020 **Carly Sommers**, Staff Attorney in our Re-Entry Project spoke with new parolees about post-conviction relief, certificates of good conduct and employment discrimination. She advised parolees to complete programs and to make sure they stay in touch with their parole officer. She also encouraged them to contact her with any questions.



NSLS CO-SPONSORS YOUTH HOMELESSNESS ROUNDTABLE

On January 16, 2020, state lawmakers met with local advocates to discuss how Long Island's affordable housing and homelessness crisis impact children, youth and their families. The roundtable was organized by New York State Senator Velmanette Montgomery, the chair of the New York State Senate Committee on Children and Families, and Nassau Suffolk Law Services. **Sheila A. Johnson, J.D.**, NSLS Director of Development and Government Affairs was the lead community organizer for the event.

The participants, including representatives from 27 not-for-profit organizations, shared their perspectives on these crises. They talked about the need for expanded access to affordable housing, and how unstable housing jeopardizes young people's access to education and mental health services. It also impacts their ability to work. Other groups impacted by these crises are seniors, veterans and people with disabilities.

Mike Wigutow, Esq. and **Eva Jimenez, L.W.S.W.**, represented NSLS on the panel. Special thanks to Jake Ivry and Jeffrey Kimmel, Esq., Advisory Council members for their support of the event. We also thank community volunteers Marvin Smith and Jackie Burbridge for staffing the event, and the staff of Farmingdale State College for their hospitality and assistance executing the event.



NASSAU SUFFOLK LAW SERVICES HAPPENINGS

WELCOME:

- **Tracey Discepolo** - Staff Attorney, Education and Disability Rights
- **Jennifer Kim** - Staff Attorney, Nassau Behavioral Health Unit
- **Kathleen Maher** - Staff Attorney, Foreclosure Prevention Project
- **Brian Ruano** - Clerk Typist/Receptionist, Nassau Office
- **Ra'anna Samad** - Staff Attorney, Community Legal Help Project

GOODBYE:

Maria Dosso Has Left the Building!



After more than 30 years of dedicated service to NSLS, **Maria Dosso** has officially retired. Her guidance has helped us forge strong relationships within our community and we have been so fortunate to have her expertise to rely on. We will miss her! We hope she will enjoy every minute of her retirement. May the next phase of her life bring her all that she seeks and more.



Congratulations

5 YEARS

Diana Amaya,
Public Benefits Paralegal

Sharon Campo,
Consumer Debt Staff Attorney

Heather Graham, Foreclosure
Prevention Staff Attorney

20 YEARS

Shervon Miller, Foreclosure
Prevention Paralegal

Vivian Storm, Esq. on her recent promotion to
Director of Communications and Community Projects.

25 YEARS

Liz Wolf,
Director of Social Work

35 YEARS

Catherine Lucidi, Director of
Community Relations

Robin Sparks, Public Benefits
Staff Attorney

Staff Attorneys **Sharon Campo, Carly Sommers, and Allison Noonan** attended the Consumer Rights Litigation Conference in Boston, MA.

Nancy Green, Director of Office Administration and Information Technology and **Aurora Hurtado**, paralegal attended the LSC Innovations in Technology Conference. The conference brought together the legal and technology communities to learn about technology products and tools to improve access to justice and delivery of services.





2020 SPRING FREE WEBINAR TRAINING SCHEDULE



Our May 15, 2020 Benefits Basics has been cancelled due to the Emergency Health Crisis. Going forward we will be hosting FREE webinars for the Landlord Tenant Amendments, One Year In Training to be held on June 19, 2020 and our Family Law Basics on July 24, 2020 To register for these webinars, please email

Cathy Lucidi at
clucidi@nsls.legal

.....

LANDLORD-TENANT AMENDMENTS, ONE YEAR IN

Friday, June 19, 9:30-12:30

NOW A FREE WEBINAR

Community advocates are often the first line of defense for our clients who face eviction or tension with their landlords. In 2019, sweeping amendments to N.Y. landlord-tenant law went into effect. The changes address every stage of the landlord-tenant relationship, from application fees and background checks, to the notices required prior to eviction. This training will review the changes in the law and discuss how the amendments have been put into effect. We will also address the recent Moratorium and **COVID-19** related landlord/tenant issues.

.....

FAMILY LAW BASICS: Friday, July 24, 9:30-12:30

NOW A FREE WEBINAR



Many litigants in family court are unable to find legal representation for some or all aspects of their case and may turn to community advocates for assistance. Learn 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. We will also discuss the impact of **COVID-19** virtual hearings for victims of domestic violence and family court appearances.



DOING WHAT'S LEGALLY POSSIBLE TO CREATE A JUST
WORLD SINCE 1966.



Message From the Executive Director

Funding Update: I am pleased to report that, despite renewed threats to eliminate civil legal services from the federal budget, on December 20, 2019, federal appropriations legislation including \$440 million of funding for the Legal Services Corporation (LSC) was enacted. This represents an increase of \$25 million over LSC's appropriation of \$415 million last year. It is the largest appropriation in actual dollars in LSC's history. The majority of the increase—\$22.2 million—is allocated for Basic Field Grants to fund the direct delivery of legal assistance to indigent Americans. NSLS is scheduled to receive just over \$1.5 million of this LSC funding in 2020. This funding supports a Long Island "poverty population" of over 177,000 based on the national federal poverty guidelines as well as a population of over a million Long Islanders who

do not meet the federal definition of poverty, but whose income does not cover basic necessities in our high cost of living community. The remainder of NSLS's budget continues to come from the NYS Office of Court Administration, the NYS Interest on Lawyer Account Fund, the NYS Department of Health, the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance and Nassau and Suffolk Counties as well as private grants and contributions from our generous supporters. While LSC funding is secure for 2020, NSLS remains committed to continuing to diversify its funding and working with the Nassau and Suffolk County Access to Justice Committees to ensure that all Long Island families have access to justice.

**1 HELEN KELLER WAY, 5TH FL.
HEMPSTEAD, N.Y. 11550
(516) 292-8100**

**1757 VETERANS MEMORIAL HWY.,
SUITE 50, ISLANDIA, N.Y. 11749
(631) 232-2400**

**400 W. MAIN ST., SUITE 301,
RIVERHEAD, N.Y. 11901
(631) 369-1112**