

Volunteer Lawyers *for* Justice

Taking Cases. Changing Lives.

<http://vljnj.org> • facebook.com/VLJNJ • twitter.com/VLJNJ

VLJ's Mission

- VLJ's mission is to improve the lives of economically disadvantaged and at-risk adults, children and families in New Jersey by empowering them with the tools, advice and pro bono representation to obtain fair and equal treatment within the legal system.
- VLJ provides legal education seminars, limited-scope assistance and full representation legal services to help address the legal needs of low-income or disadvantaged New Jersey residents who face civil legal issues.

VLJ's Growth Over 15 Years

- In operation since 2001, VLJ has grown from an Essex County based program run by one part-time staff person relying on 30 volunteers, to an award-winning statewide organization with a staff of 13 and more than 1,200 volunteers.
- VLJ operates 10 distinct pro bono programs serving clients with a particular legal problem or assisting people in an underserved client population.

The Strength of VLJ

- Dedicated staff
 - 13 staff members with decades of expertise in pro bono project management
- Committed trustees
- Reliable volunteers
- Financial stability



VLJ's Core Values

- Aiding Women, Children and Families
- Working through Financial Crisis
- Advocating for Veterans
- Responding to Disaster



Benefits of Volunteering with VLJ

- Discrete, limited-scope opportunities available
- Team-building experience for lawyers and staff
- Ability to expand your comfort zone by learning a new area of law
- Opportunity to have and refine existing legal skills
- Enhancement of a law firm's public image in the community at large
- Direct impact on the life of a person in need
- Malpractice coverage
- Exemption from Madden assignments*

Why you we need your help?

Poverty in New Jersey

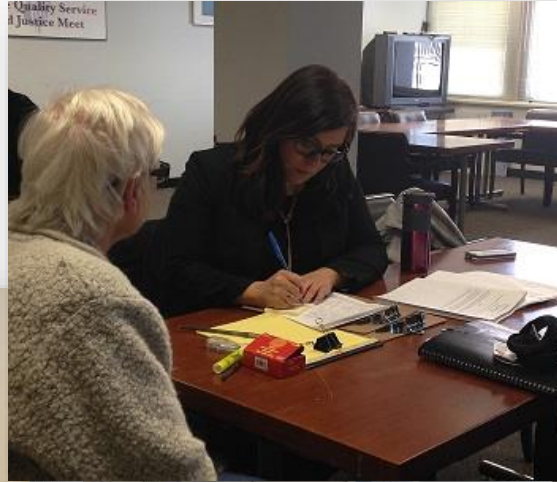
According to 2012 US Census data:

- 31.5% of New Jersey's population lives below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) ---2.7 million people
- Almost 1 million people live below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level



*Legal Services of New Jersey
Poverty Research Institute,
September 2014*

Pro Bono opportunities for family law attorneys



VLJ has provided pro bono legal services to low-income individuals for over 15 years

In 2014 VLJ assisted 609 people with family law matters through our clinics and direct representation

VLJ's Divorce Program

Filing for Divorce Workshop

- Held the 2nd of Thursday each month, from 2:00-5:00 pm
- Walk-in workshop for litigants
- Attorneys of all experience levels are welcome
- Training materials available
- Staff attorney onsite to support volunteers
- Legal assistance provided includes, advice about the divorce process, preparation of initial divorce pleadings and instructions regarding service

**Workshop location: Essex County Family Court,
212 Washington Street, 10th Floor, Room 1070, Newark**



VLJ's Divorce Program



Post-Filing Divorce Workshop

- Held the 1st Thursday of each month, from 2:00-5:00 pm
- Walk-in workshop for litigants
- Attorneys of all experience levels are welcome
- Training materials available
- Staff attorney onsite to support volunteers
- Legal assistance provided includes, advice, trial preparation, and drafting of pleadings including motions for publication (substituted service), requests to enter default, notices of proposed final judgment, and final judgments of divorce

**Workshop location: Essex County Family Court,
212 Washington Street, 10th Floor** Room 1070, Newark

V LJ's Child Support Program

Child Support Workshop

- Held the 3rd Thursday of each month, from 1:45-4:45 pm
- Walk-in workshop for litigants
- Attorneys of all experience levels are welcome
- Training materials available
- Staff attorney onsite to support volunteers
- Assistance provided includes, advice about whether modification/ emancipation is warranted, preparation of pleadings, and instruction on filing and service



**Workshop location: Historic Courthouse,
470 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Room B03 (Basement) Newark**

Direct Referral Program



Represent low-income clients with family law matters

- Provide direct representation to low-income individuals with family law matters, including divorce, child support, and custody matters
- Clients are the neediest who are unlikely to prevail with attorney representation. These clients have barriers to accessing justice, including victims of domestic violence, crime victims, veterans and active duty personnel in the military, those at risk for homelessness, disabled, elderly, or language barriers.
- Registered volunteers receive a listing of available cases on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of every month.
- You decide which case to take based on your availability and interest.

Other volunteer opportunities

Educate the public! Join our panel.

VLJ offers informational seminars about various legal topics, including family law, estate planning, estate administration, adult guardianship, bankruptcy, housing, immigration law, unemployment benefits, employment law, and many other legal matters. Speakers will present to groups at community groups and local libraries. If you are interested please contact us for a list of available speaking opportunities.



Support our volunteer attorneys!

- As a mentor you would provide guidance to volunteer attorneys who have taken on direct representation of cases through our program.
- As a mentor you will speak with our volunteer and provide guidance on their case.
- Many of our mentors are panelists for our CLEs throughout the year.
- VLJ offers these CLEs to support the work of our volunteers. For our CLEs we need assistance with locating speakers and creating educational materials for the training.

Thank you!

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FREE Child Support Legal Help

Volunteer Lawyers
for Justice
Taking Cases. Changing Lives.

Child Support Program

2016 Dates

January 21

February 18

March 17

- Informational seminar about how to change New Jersey child support orders
- Open to all NJ residents
- ***No appointment needed***
- Held from 12:00-1:00 pm
- Historic Courthouse, 470 Martin Luther King Blvd, B03 (Basement), Newark, NJ 07102

Filing a Motion to Modify Child Support



- For legal help you must be screened for financial eligibility AND have a child support matter or live in Essex County
- Screening takes place directly after the seminar
- Free legal help available to those who qualify
- You may be at the courthouse until 4:30, depending upon demand
- Bring your previous child support orders, your last 3 pay stubs and/or other proof of your income

Questions? ¿Preguntas? Or if you need an interpreter, or have additional questions call Volunteer Lawyers for Justice at 973-645-1955 or visit our website at www.vljnj.org

FREE Legal Help

Divorce Workshops

Filing for Divorce Workshop

- Informational divorce seminar open to all NJ residents
- Qualifying applicants receive paperwork needed to file a divorce case and meet with an attorney
- Held on the **2nd Thursday of each month**
- **Must arrive by noon**; may be at the clinic until 5 pm depending upon demand. ***No appointment needed.***
- Wilentz Justice Building, Family Court, 212 Washington St., 10th Floor, Room 1070, Newark, NJ 07102

2016 Dates

January 14

February 11

March 10

April 14

May 12

June 9

Legal Help After a Divorce is Filed

- Meet with a lawyer who can review/draft legal documents and answer questions about your divorce
- Financial requirements to qualify
- Divorce case must be filed in Essex County
- Held on the **1st Thursday of each month**
- **Must arrive by 2:00 pm**; may be at the clinic until 5 pm depending upon demand. ***No appointment needed.***
- Wilentz Justice Building, Family Court, 212 Washington St., 10th Floor, Room 1070, Newark, NJ 07102

2016 Dates

January 7

February 4

March 3

April 7

May 5

June 2

HOW TO VOLUNTEER WITH VLJ

For more information about VLJ programs and services, please visit <http://vlini.org>

To register as a volunteer, go to the “Volunteer” tab of the website and complete a *Volunteer Form*.



Volunteer Form

As a registered volunteer, you will begin receiving our direct referral case list and will be contact by VLJ staff about your volunteer interests.

*Thank you for your support of VLJ and the client we serve!
VLJ – Taking cases, changing lives.*



P.O. Box 32040 | Newark, NJ 07102 | Telephone (973) 645-1955 | Fax (973) 645-1954

Become a Volunteer Today!

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ) provides free legal services to low-income adults, children, and families in New Jersey to ensure fair and equal treatment within the legal system. Legal services range from brief legal advice to full representation on a variety of civil legal issues. In 14 years, VLJ has grown from a small Essex-County based non-profit to an award-winning statewide pro bono leader.

As the premiere pro bono provider in NJ and an approved pro bono provider of the NJ Supreme Court, VLJ offers our volunteers:

- Comprehensive live, video and written training materials and access to skilled mentors
- Malpractice insurance
- An exemption from Madden assignments from the court after 25 hours of pro bono service
- Interesting and inspiring legal work that fits with each individual volunteer's schedule

Brief descriptions of VLJ's programs are listed below; full information can be found at www.vljinj.org. To volunteer, go to the "Volunteer" tab of the website and complete a *Volunteer Form*. As a registered volunteer, you will be contacted by VLJ staff about your volunteer interests and will begin receiving VLJ's case opportunities emails.

VLJ Program Descriptions

*** Denotes that program has a limited-scope legal services component**

✚ **Bankruptcy Program.** Co-sponsored by Merck & Co., Inc., this project pairs volunteer attorneys with low-income individuals who require assistance with Chapter 7 bankruptcies. Volunteer attorneys review client files, draft pleadings, appear at Section 341 meetings and represent clients through discharge. Attorneys with bankruptcy experience are always needed for this project, and volunteers must be admitted to the US District Court for New Jersey.

✚ **Child Support Program.*** VLJ partners with the Essex County Family Court on this program where volunteer attorneys provide legal advice and limited-scope representation to clients with child support modification and emancipation issues. All clients have attended a 1-hr legal seminar explaining the basics of child support modification prior to consulting with an attorney at the clinic. Attorneys meet with up to 3 clients and draft pleadings that are filed by the litigant pro se. Training is available and family law expertise is not required.

Clinics are held on Fridays from 2:00-5:00 pm in downtown Newark

✚ **Children's Representation Program.** Volunteer attorneys represent children with disabilities who have been denied the special education services to which they are entitled and/or represent children who are victims of harassment/bullying in a school setting. Referrals are made to VLJ from around the state. Training is available and all new volunteers are paired with a skilled mentoring attorney. Education law experience is not required.

✚ **Consumer Law Program.*** VLJ partners with the Essex County Court to sponsor this program providing assistance to low-income debtors. Volunteer attorneys provide legal advice and limited-scope

representation to debtors representing themselves in civil court. Attorneys meet with clients for 30-minute appointments at this walk-in legal clinic. Training is available and consumer law experience is not required to volunteer.

Clinics are held on the first 3 Tuesdays of the month from 9:30am-12:30pm in downtown Newark

✚ **Disaster Legal Response Program (DLRP).*** Volunteers provide assistance to the victims of Superstorm Sandy with storm-related legal issues including FEMA, insurance, contract disputes, state grants and NJ DEP Blue Acres real estate matters. Pro bono lawyers are needed to accept full-representation cases and some limited-scope clinic opportunities are available. Training is available.

✚ **Divorce Program.*** In partnership with the Essex County Family Court, VLJ coordinates 2 monthly divorce legal clinics, one focused on filing for divorce and the other addressing all issues post-filing. At both clinics volunteer attorneys provide qualifying applicants with legal advice and assist with drafting pleadings that the litigant files pro se. Clients receiving consultations at the filing clinic will have just attended a 1-hr seminar outlining the divorce process in NJ. Training is available and family law expertise is not required.

Clinics are held on the 1st and 2nd Thursdays of the month from 2:00-5:00 pm in downtown Newark

✚ **Reentry Legal Services (ReLeSe).** Created in partnership with then-Newark Mayor Cory Booker's office, ReLeSe helps Essex County residents with criminal records address the civil legal barriers that serve as obstacles to their successful community reintegration. ReLeSe targets the areas of greatest need among the reentry population, and in addition to referring clients to the Child Support Program, ReLeSe coordinates:

- *Driver's License Clinic.** At this monthly legal clinic, volunteers provide advice, draft letter motions and/or prepare clients to appear pro se in municipal court in order to restore their driver's licenses. Training is available and municipal court experience is not required to volunteer.

Clinics are held on the 3rd Thursday of the month from 1:00-5:00 pm in downtown Newark

- *Criminal Record Expungement Clinic.** ReLeSe staff and volunteers from Gibbons, PC screen applicants through a monthly clinic to determine if they are eligible for expungement relief. If expungement is appropriate, cases are referred to volunteers for full representation. Training is available and expungement experience is not required to volunteer.

✚ **Trafficking Victims Legal Assistance Program.** Volunteer attorneys represent victims of human trafficking under NJ's Human Trafficking Prevention, Protection and Treatment Act. Volunteers draft comprehensive petitions for vacatur and will likely make a court appearance. Referrals are accepted throughout NJ, but may be concentrated in Atlantic County. Training is available and cases will be co-counseled with VLJ staff.

✚ **Veterans Legal Program.** VLJ operates 3 distinct projects that provide legal services to veterans and military personnel; they include:

- *Female Veterans Program.* VLJ is conducting a legal needs assessment amongst female veterans in New Jersey, as well as, their service providers. We hope to ultimately design a legal services program that effectively considers their personal and unique military experiences, while working to address their legal needs in civilian life. VLJ also coordinates legal seminars on topics relevant to women veterans.
- *Discharge Upgrade Program.* Volunteer attorneys represent clients who have been discharged from the military at a status that is less than "honorable" or who need assistance with changing their military records. Many clients were discharged with these statuses due to undiagnosed PTSD or traumatic brain injury. Discharge status is key to determining which benefits are available to a veteran. Training is available and volunteers do not need to be certified by the VA to take these cases.
- *PSEG Legal Clinic.** Volunteer attorneys from PSE&G, McCarter & English LLP and Gibbons PC, assist veterans with driver's license restoration, expungement of criminal records and child support issues at a monthly clinic in Newark. This program is open only to attorneys from the above-listed offices.