

# Overview LASNNY Legal Expertise and Special Programs

**The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York serves the 16 counties from the Catskills to the Canadian border, with 5 offices.**

[www.lasnnny.org](http://www.lasnnny.org)

**Albany Office (Center for Civil Legal Services)**  
Serving Albany, Columbia, Greene & Rensselaer Counties  
95 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12208  
**518-462-6765**

**Amsterdam Office**  
Serving Fulton, Montgomery & Schoharie Counties  
6 Market Street, Amsterdam, NY 12010  
**518-842-9466**

**Canton Office**  
Serving St. Lawrence County & the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation  
17 Hodskin Street, Canton, NY 13617  
**315-386-4586**

**Plattsburgh Office**  
Serving Clinton, Essex, Franklin & Hamilton Counties  
100 Court Street, Plattsburgh NY  
**518-563-4022**

**Saratoga Office**  
Serving Saratoga, Washington & Warren Counties  
40 New Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866  
**518-587-5188**



**Legal Aid  
Society**

NORTHEASTERN NEW YORK

## Our Mission

*The Legal Aid Society of Northeastern New York fights for fairness, dignity, and justice for those living in poverty and for a society which is inclusive and equitable for all. We transform lives, build community and empower people by using the law to address individual and systemic wrongs and inequities.*

# Our Services

The Legal Aid Society has attorneys and paralegals that provide legal assessment, advice, brief service and representation in a broad range of civil (not criminal) matters. Our target population is low income people, although in some special projects we can provide assistance to individuals whose income or assets exceed the "usual" Legal Aid guidelines. We will give advice on almost any civil matter.

We work with private attorneys in the area who voluntarily provide pro bono legal services including advice, assessment, brief service and full representation to clients screened and referred by the Legal Aid Society through our Private Attorney Involvement (PAI) referral program.

## Eligibility:

Clients must be eligible for our services according to our financial guidelines. In general, income must be at or below 125% of poverty, and cannot be above 200% of poverty. Also clients cannot have liquid assets which exceed certain monetary amounts. Special projects may have different financial eligibility guidelines. We urge people to call to be screened for eligibility and to learn about what services we provide to address their particular problem.

In general, clients must be citizens, permanent legal residents, asylees, refugees, or related to a citizen (marriage, parent or unmarried child under the age of 21) and have filed certain documents with USCIS. There is an exception as to citizenship status for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking.

## SPECIFIC TYPES OF CASES

**Consumer/Finance** – We provide advice, brief service and representation in Chapter 7 bankruptcy cases. We also provide advice, brief service and representation in various debt collection matters, and have access to PAI referrals for similar services. We provide advice, assessment, brief service and representation in matters involving public utilities, harassment of debtors, wage garnishment, and frozen bank accounts. We conduct a monthly consumer clinic to educate consumers on how to manage their debt, debt collection practices, garnishments and whether to consider bankruptcy.

**Education** – We provide advice, brief service and representation in educational and special education matters to children with disabilities including Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), Section 504 Plans, school discipline, Behavioral Interventional Plans (BIPs), and the rights of homeless children.

**Employment** – We provide advice, brief service and referral on job discrimination, wage claims and other employment matters. We have an attorney who provides advice, brief service and representation in unemployment insurance benefits matters. We also have a PAI advice program available for individuals who would like to meet with an attorney and receive advice regarding an unemployment benefits matter.

**Family** – We provide advice, and, as resources permit, representation for victims of domestic violence in a broad range of family matters including orders of protection, custody/visitation, child support, and divorce/separation. We provide advice and referrals on all other family matters. We have a number of divorce programs, depending upon county of residence.

**Foreclosure** – Our Foreclosure Prevention Project (FPP) provides staff to represent low to moderate income homeowners who are facing mortgage foreclosure. The homeowner must be facing foreclosure, typically having received a summons and complaint to be eligible for assistance from our FPP attorneys. We provide representation at settlement conferences and in litigation, negotiate with lenders, and assist homeowners who are seeking alternatives to foreclosure. We also can assist homeowners in tax foreclosures. We can assist tenants who are negatively impacted by foreclosures.

**Health** – We provide advice, assessment, brief service and representation in Medicaid, Medicare, and some other health issues. PAI referrals are also sometimes available. We provide information, advice and representation to individuals who need long term care services (help with activities of daily living) and need assistance with matters related to Medicare and Medicaid Managed Care applications and benefits. Eligible patients of St. Peter's Hospital receive assistance in a broad variety of civil legal problems which are related to their health.

**Housing** – We provide advice, assessment and representation in the areas of federal subsidized housing rights and public housing (admission, termination or eviction). We provide advice, assessment and full representation in landlord-tenant matters including and especially, eviction representation through our Solution to End Homelessness Project (STEHP) and our Emergency Solutions Grant Programs for clients who are facing imminent eviction or homelessness or who are homeless.

**Income Maintenance** – We provide advice, assessment, brief service and full representation in all types of entitlement program cases, including Family Assistance, Safety Net Assistance, Social Security Disability/SSI, Unemployment Insurance Benefits, and SNAP (formerly known as food stamps). Our Disability Advocacy Project, Children's Law Project and the HIV/AIDS Law Consortium Project help people qualify for federally funded disability benefits. Our STEHP and ESGP Project staff also assists clients to secure income in order to obtain or maintain housing and prevent homelessness and evictions.

**Individual Rights** – We provide advice and brief service in many individual rights cases such as mental health, physically disabled rights, other individual rights, but we generally do not provide extended representation in these matters. We cannot represent prisoners in litigation or cases involving jail conditions.

**Juvenile** – We provide advice and/or brief service in most matters.

**Miscellaneous** – We also provide PAI referrals for incorporation or dissolutions for community groups which are eligible under our group eligibility guidelines. We give advice on license issues and torts. We provide advice and representation in will/estates. PAI referrals are often available.

**Tax** – We provide advice, assessment, brief service and full representation in income tax disputes before the IRS and United States Tax Court. As long as there is a related federal tax dispute, we can also help with New York State tax problems. Issues include Innocent Spouse Relief Requests, Injured Spouse Claims, Audits/Examinations, Earned Income Tax Credit Appeals, Deficiency Notices, Liens and Levies, Alternative Collection Methods, Settlement of Tax Debts, and Identity Theft Issues.

**Veterans** – We have one program specifically for Veterans, although veterans are frequently served through other LAS programs. We provide advice to veterans regarding various civil legal issues. If eligible, a veteran is scheduled to meet with a volunteer at the VA Stratton Medical Center in Albany. This program takes place the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month and appointments are in the morning. Space for this program is limited. For this program, veterans call our PAI program directly at 518-689-6334. Intake is Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

**Children’s Law Project (CLP)** – provides legal advice and assistance for low-income children with disabilities. Focusing on the services needed for a free and appropriate public education (FAPE), protecting children’s rights, ensuring fair treatment in cases of school discipline, and assisting children who are seeking Supplemental Security Income (SSI).

*Counties served: Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, and Schenectady*

**Closing the Gap (CTG)** – connects low-income consumers and tenants to a volunteer advocate using innovative technology to address their legal needs. We will give you legal advice, information, and/or a referral to a volunteer attorney that will help prepare you with the document(s) you need for court.

*Counties served: All 16 LASNNY Counties*

**Community Legal Education** – LASNNY has a series of written informational brochures, Legal Lifelines, on a variety of topics. Legal Aid also posts legal information on the Internet at lasnny.org and refers callers to [www.lawhelp.org/ny](http://www.lawhelp.org/ny).

**Crime Victims Attorney Project (CVAP)** – specifically supports and assists victims as they access available victim compensation and fully utilize their rights under New York’s Crime Victims Law and provides skilled and empathetic representation in orders of protection, custody, child support, matrimonial, and other legal matters. The CVAP serves victims of crime through in-person and phone direct legal assistance, including in-court representation and advocacy related to civil and criminal proceedings.

*Counties served: Warren, Washington, Saratoga, Fulton, Montgomery, and St. Lawrence*

**Disability Advocacy Project** – funded by the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance to provide representation to disabled individuals whose applications for federally funded disability benefits (Social Security or SSI) have been denied.

*Counties served: St. Lawrence, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, and Hamilton*

**Domestic Violence Legal Assistance Project (DVLAP)** – provides comprehensive, specialized, holistic legal services and representation to victims of domestic violence, assisting individuals fleeing domestic violence and representing individuals in Family Court to obtain and enforce comprehensive safety measures.

*Counties served: Clinton, Columbia, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Greene, Hamilton, Montgomery, St. Lawrence, Saratoga, Schoharie, Warren, and Washington*

**Foreclosure Prevention Project** – provides legal assistance to low- and moderate-income homeowners facing mortgage foreclosure, typically who have been sued by their lender. We provide representation at settlement conferences and in litigation, negotiate with lenders, and assist homeowners who are seeking alternatives to foreclosure. We also provide representation to homeowners in tax foreclosures. We can assist tenants who are negatively impacted by foreclosures.

*Counties served: All 16 LASNNY Counties*

**HIV/AIDS Law Consortium (HALC)** – provides centralized coordinated intake for individuals and families living with or affected by HIV/AIDS. Intake and referral occur at the Legal Aid Society and advice, brief service ongoing legal assistance is provided by the Legal Aid Society and the Health Law Project of the Albany Law School Clinic and Justice Center. Legal assistance available through HALC addresses a wide range of civil legal matters, with priority given to Social Security benefits, health care proxies, wills, powers of attorney, discrimination, breach of confidentiality, public assistance and housing.

*Counties: All LASNNY counties except St. Lawrence*

**Immigration Intake Project** – in partnership with the Legal Aid Society of Rochester and Hiscock Legal Aid in Syracuse, provides intake and referral to LAS of Rochester of persons with immigration questions and problems. LASNNY staff also provides ongoing representation to qualifying clients with immigration and naturalization cases. LASNNY can serve immigrant domestic violence victims or victims of trafficking regardless of their immigration status.

*Counties served: All 16 LASNNY Counties*

**Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic (LITC)** – provides assistance to low income taxpayers with disputes with the IRS, questions about tax status and possible penalties, letters, notices or bills from the IRS, withheld tax refunds, denials of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) or tax returns being audited or examined. Assistance can be provided on related NYS income tax matters.

*Counties served: All 16 LASNNY Counties*

**Nutrition Outreach and Education Project (NOEP)** – pre-screens and assists households in applying for and establishing and maintaining eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps. The NOEP staff does intake at various senior service, food pantry or other community food sites and receives direct referrals from food pantries, WIC and other service providers, and conducts community outreach and education.

*Counties served: Albany, Clinton, Fulton, Montgomery, Saratoga, and Washington*

**PAI (Private Attorney Involvement)** – Private attorneys provide legal assistance to our clients free of charge. Through the Assigned Counsel Program and pro se clinics private attorneys assist our clients in divorce matters. Bankruptcies are also referred to the private bar. Clients get assistance from private attorneys by going through regular intake, special project intake and special bankruptcy and divorce intake. Through the PAI Program, private attorneys also conduct ask a lawyer clinics for individuals who are LGBT, veterans, or unemployed.

*Counties served: All 16 LASNNY Counties*

**Senior Legal Services (SLS)** – provides advice and representation for seniors 60 years and older. The program is funded by various Departments of Aging. In addition to advice SLS provides brief service and representation on all civil legal issues including consumer, housing, benefits, family, Medicare, Medicaid, estate planning, wills, and advance directives.

*Counties served: Albany, Clinton, Fulton, Rensselaer, St. Lawrence, Washington, and the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation*

**Solutions to End Homelessness Project (STEHP) and Emergency Solutions Grant Programs** – provides eviction representation and shelter-related public assistance representation for those facing imminent homelessness or who are homeless. Housing advocates also secure income and benefits to help families maintain permanent housing. Paralegal/case managers also assist homeless families placed at Marillac Family shelter, Mercy House and Schuyler Inn in locating and maintaining permanent housing.

*Counties served: St. Lawrence, Clinton, Essex, Franklin, and Hamilton*

**The Albany Project (TAP)** – dedicates a full-time staff attorney to each of the three most impoverished neighborhoods in the city of Albany – the South End, Arbor Hill & West Hill. Providing the full spectrum of legal services to the low-income residents of these neighborhoods ranging from legal information to full legal representation, and including legal education workshops, self-help tools, legal support for groups, and negotiation and litigation to address and resolve underlying systemic problems in each of the communities they serve.

*County served: Albany*

*We are currently looking for TAP funding for a dedicated staff person for and another dedicated staff person for West Hill. If you are interested in helping to fund these projects, please let us know.*

**The Albany based Center for Civil Legal Services** that serves Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer Columbia and Greene Counties. Opened in 2017 we are raising funds for the second phase of the project which includes converting rental space into the Executive Suite, Housing Attorney Suite and the Parking lot. Total estimated for this project is \$400,000.

**For media inquiries or for more information on funding for specific programs,**

please contact Deanne Grimaldi, Director of Development and Communication

at 518-869-6336 or [dgrimaldi@lasnny.org](mailto:dgrimaldi@lasnny.org)