

# VOLUNTEER LAWYERS FOR JUSTICE

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***TAKE A CASE. CHANGE A LIFE.***



# THE STATS

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- Each year, one-third of New Jersey's indigent population has a civil legal problem
- Only one in five will secure the assistance of a lawyer

Source-"Unequal Access to Justice: Many Legal Needs, Too Little Legal Assistance", Legal Services Foundation of New Jersey, September 2009.

# THAT MEANS INDIGENT:

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- ❑ Tenants are routinely and unlawfully evicted from their homes
- ❑ Women are mostly unrepresented in family law matters such as custody, divorce and child support and domestic violence restraint proceedings
- ❑ Consumers are regularly victims of fraud and abusive debt collection practices
- ❑ Special needs children are going without critical special services in their schools

# THAT MEANS:

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- ❑ Legal services organizations turn away thousand of deserving persons with critical legal needs each year





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Mission Statement:

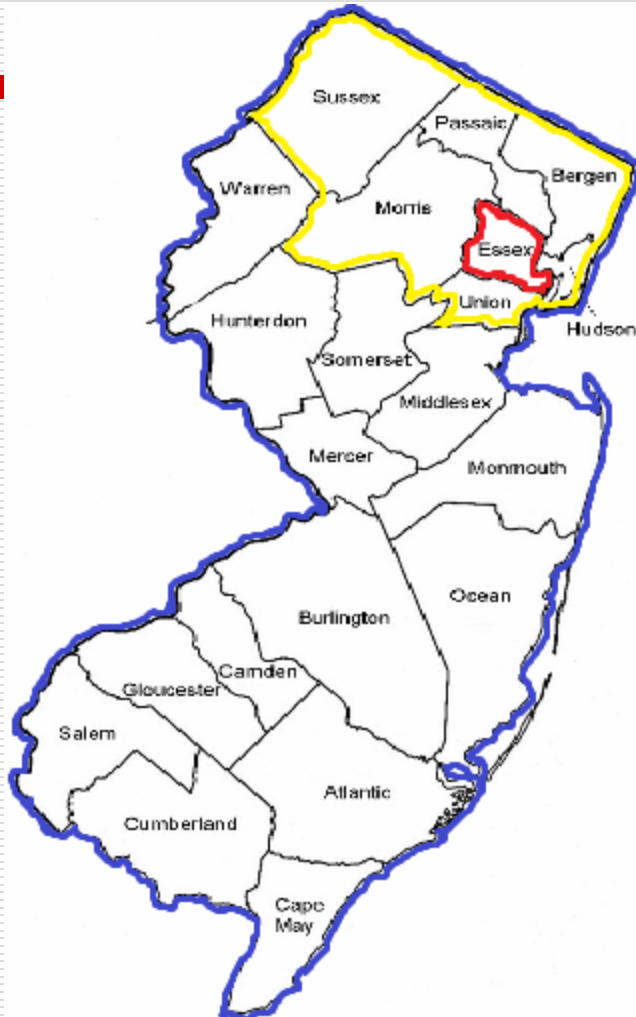
**Volunteer Lawyers for Justice seeks to improve the lives of economically disadvantaged adults, children and families in New Jersey by empowering them with the tools, advice and pro bono representation to obtain fair and equal treatment within the legal system.**


# WHAT IS VLJ?

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- ❑ VLJ began in 2001 as a direct referral service solely for the indigent of Essex County
- ❑ Today, VLJ services hundreds of clients with civil matters throughout New Jersey through 8 distinct projects
- ❑ Approximately 1,500 attorneys volunteer with VLJ
- ❑ VLJ is recognized by the Supreme Court as a legal services provider so court costs are waived and volunteers are EXEMPT from mandatory pro bono
- ❑ VLJ is an award winning pro bono program recognized by the ECBA, NJSBA, the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, the Legal Services Foundation of Essex County and more, for its innovative pro bono programs
- ❑ Learn more at: [www.vljnj.org](http://www.vljnj.org)

# VLJ Programs by County



 NLARCC, Family Law Clinic, Divorce Clinic, ReLeSe & Direct Referral Program

 Bankruptcy

 Education and Disaster Legal Response

# WHY VOLUNTEER WITH VLJ?

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**USING YOUR LEGAL SKILLS TO HELP AN INDIGENT PERSON IN NEED IS THE MOST MEANINGFUL WORK YOU CAN DO**

**“I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I do know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”**

**ALBERT SCHWEITZER**



# WHY VOLUNTEER WITH VLJ?

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**YOU WILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE  
IN THE LIFE OF SOMEONE  
LESS FORTUNATE**

**“Nobody made a greater mistake  
than he who did nothing because  
he could do only a little.”**

**EDMUND BURKE**

# VLJ PROVIDES VARIED PRO BONO PROJECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

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- ❑ **Limited-Scope Legal Clinics.** Volunteer at a limited-scope legal clinic where volunteer attorneys provide advice and brief services to clients in defined areas of law. Clinics are available in the areas of divorce, family law, driver's license restoration, consumer law/debt collection and disaster legal services. Clinics are typically 2-3 hours in duration.
- ❑ **Direct Representation.** Provide full representation in an area of law of your choice. We have opportunities in the following areas: education law, consumer law, bankruptcy, disaster legal services, family law, estate planning, uncontested adult guardianship, criminal record expungement and drivers license.
- ❑ **Train and Mentor** new attorneys.
- ❑ **Assist at VLJ's Offices** with client intake, limited assistance clinics, and more.
- ❑ **Firm/Corporate Signature Projects.** Participate in your organization's signature project with VLJ - e.g. Merck/Lowenstein Bankruptcy Project.

# What Can VLJ Do For You?

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- ❑ Volunteers are exempt from mandatory pro bono assignments
- ❑ Free legal training, materials and sample forms and pleadings
- ❑ All cases are screened for merit and financial eligibility
- ❑ Malpractice coverage provided
- ❑ Mentoring and support provided

# The Business Case for Pro Bono

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- ❑ Cases provide excellent legal training for young associates- courtroom experience, client contact, negotiation skills, exposure to new areas of law, etc.
- ❑ Positive media attention for company/firm
- ❑ Paying clients love to see their counsel provide community service
- ❑ Team building for lawyers and staff
- ❑ Good for retention - morale boost for overworked attorneys
- ❑ Awards and recognition

# Awards and Recognition

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**It is important to recognize volunteers' efforts. VLJ does so in the following ways:**

- ° **Nominates outstanding attorneys for State and local Bar Pro Bono awards**
- ° **Includes Honor Roll on VLJ's website- [www.vljnj.org](http://www.vljnj.org)**
- ° **Profiles outstanding firms/companies in regular e-newsletter**
- ° **Regularly features "Outstanding Volunteers" on VLJ's website and in the *New Jersey Law Journal***
- ° **Sends press releases to industry papers**
- ° **Hosts a yearly "recognition event" honoring outstanding attorneys, firms and corporations of the year.**

So....

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TAKE A CASE. CHANGE A LIFE.

*It might just be your life that's  
changed!*