



NORTH PENN LEGAL SERVICES

Our mission is to provide civil legal representation to low-income people and ensure equal access to justice for all.

As a regional provider of civil legal aid for more than 45 years, North Penn Legal Services (NPLS) helps low-income people throughout 20 counties in Northeast Pennsylvania. Services include individual representation, information and advice, community legal education, and support for those clients who take direct responsibility for handling some or all aspects of their legal problem.

In Lehigh & Northampton Counties, our Bethlehem office staff comprised of 7 staff attorneys, 3 paralegals, and 3 support staff serve an area with a total poverty population of 88,601.

Funding:

Government funding is our primary source of funding. The Pennsylvania Legal Assistance Network (PLAN) provides 22% of our funds. PLAN distributes IOLTA and Title XX monies. The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) provides 34% of our funds. Additional monies are obtained from United Ways, bar associations, local groups, private foundations, and individuals.

Getting Results: NPLS Outcomes for Lehigh & Northampton Counties in 2011

NPLS Cases Handled- FY 09-10	NPLS	Private Attorney Involvement	Total	%
Consumer	258	13	271	11%
Education	4		4	1%
Employment	361		361	15%
Family	343	112	455	19%
Juvenile	7		7	1%
Health	55		55	2%
Housing	694	10	704	28%
Income Maintenance	430	3	433	19%
Individual Rights	2		2	1%
Other/Multiple Topics	76		76	3%
TOTAL	2,230	138	2,368	100%

If you need legal assistance and cannot afford to pay an attorney, start with a phone call to **1.877.9.LEGAL.0**, 9:30 AM – 11:30 AM, and 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday or visit our website at www.northpennlegal.org.

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The **wealthiest 10% of Americans**--those making more than \$138,000 each year--**earned 11.4 times the roughly \$12,000 made by those living near or below the poverty line** in 2008, according to newly released census figures. That ratio was an increase from 11.2 in 2007 and the previous high of 11.22 in 2003. Analysts attributed the widening gap to the wave of layoffs in the economic downturn that have devastated household budgets. They said while the richest Americans may be seeing reductions in executive pay, those at the bottom of the income ladder are often unemployed and struggling to get by.

Currently, there are **256,486 individuals** in NPLS' service area who are **eligible for our services**.

In Pennsylvania, with **1 out of 5 households lacking adequate income**, the problem is clearly not one explained by individual characteristics, but rather one that reflects the structure of the economy.

The latest NPLS Community Needs Assessment was conducted in 2007. **Housing issues were reported to be the most pressing need** for the low-income community. **Custody support and divorce are the second most important concerns**. Child support is listed as the third most important issue. The study also found that clients have difficulties with Public Assistance benefits. Of those responding to the question regarding difficulty with obtaining and keeping public assistance benefits, 58.3% report that benefits have been unfairly denied or reduced, and 41.7% have been required to pay back money received. Just over one-third of respondents to this question (36.7%) reported that they have been discouraged from applying for benefits. According to NPLS clients surveyed, in 2007 the **greatest obstacles to success are reported to be "lack of sufficient income" (68.7%) and "not enough job opportunities" (47.8%)**.

In 2010, NPLS turned away **15,400 applicants**, most of whom were financially eligible for services.

Prothonotary Warden in **Monroe County reported foreclosure filings hit a record 1,253 in 2007**. That is half again as high as the 835 filings in 2006, and a one-third increase from the previous record of 941 set in 2003.

Poverty Statistics

As of 6/3/11

1,703,120 people in Pennsylvania received food stamps in 2011.

A Brookings Institution report dated August 2008 reveals that the **Allentown-Bethlehem-Easton Metro Area experienced the greatest increase in concentrated working poverty at a rate of 19.6%**. *The area known as the Lehigh Valley ranked 10th among US metropolitan areas with the highest concentrations of poor workers.*

In order to qualify for NPLS services, a **family of four**, as an example, **can make up to \$ 27,938** (\$2,328 per month or \$537 per week).

A survey (dated April 2009) commissioned by the American Bar Association and conducted by Harris Interactive records high support levels for provision of the basic legal help for those in crisis. More than half of all Americans (**53%**) **said their family's financial situation had worsened in the past six months**. In the wake of the recession, grantees of Legal Services Corporation in all regions of the country are reporting a wave of new clients seeking help. Agencies say that common issues include: foreclosure prevention, late payments on medical bills, car and credit cards, and delinquent child support.

According to the Federal Poverty Level Overlooked and Undercounted study, about **85% of Pennsylvania households with inadequate income have at least one worker**. In more than half of these households, there is at least one full-time year-round worker. 15% of Pennsylvania households with insufficient income have no workers, and 29% have two or more workers.

The **poverty rate for Pennsylvania is 11.2%** as compared to a 13.2% poverty rate nationally. The US Census Bureau's American Community Survey data shows an increased poverty and food stamp use across the board, as just one more statistical snapshot of recent hardships among households. The information comes from surveys of 3 million households across the country conducted throughout 2008.