THE LEGAL SERVICES OF NEW JERSEY REENTRY CORPORATION
The Legal Services Department of New Jersey Reentry Corporation (NJRC) seamlessly removes legal barriers that impede our program participants from successfully reintegrating into society. NJRC Legal Services Coordinators develop coherent lines of communication between program participants and entities such as Superior and Municipal Courts, administrative, and other governmental agencies that may make successful reintegration a difficult and discouraging journey.

Legal Service Coordinators assist participants with navigating New Jersey Municipal Courts and their necessary applications. They also help participants through document collection, corresponding with the courts and other entities, and additional hurdles imposed by the government agencies that make it difficult to restore driving privileges, obtain identification, and connect to government services and benefits for which they may be qualified.

In restoring the New Jersey driving privileges for our participants, the Legal Services Department aids participants in developing and executing a plan of action that allows for the reinstatement of driving privileges supporting a successful reintegration. NJRC’s legal team routinely sends requests to Municipal Courts to lift driver license suspensions, waive or reduce fines through time served by our participants, and recall warrants that jeopardize not only their driving privileges but their freedom as well.

**OVER $73,000.00 IN FINES DISMISSED**

We were successful in having $73,795.90 in fines dismissed from March 2021 through August 2021 after advocating for our program participants in New Jersey Municipal Courts.

**175 WARRANTS RECALLED**

From March 2021 through August 2021, we have been successful in having 175 warrants recalled after advocating for our program participants in New Jersey Municipal Courts.

**NEARLY 350 BIRTH CERTIFICATES OBTAINED**

The Legal Services Department obtained 342 program participant birth certificates from March 2021 through August 2021. Our goal, which we almost always meet and often exceed, is to provide clients with certified copies of their birth certificates within two weeks of their requests. We have
obtained birth certificates from California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York City, New York State, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Washington D.C. We have also obtained birth certificates from Italy, Pakistan, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

**OVER 250 NJ MVC DRIVERS LICENSES RESTORED/IDENTIFICATION CARDS RECEIVED**

From March 2021 through August 2021, the Legal Services Department assisted 166 of our program participants with resolving all underlying driver license suspensions and paid their License Restoration Fees completely to restore their driving privileges.

During the same period, we were also able to obtain and finance 115 New Jersey Motor Vehicle Commission Identification Cards.

**ALMOST 40 NJ MVC REGISTRATIONS RESTORED**

Between March of 2021 and August of 2021, the Legal Services Department assisted 39 of our program participants with restoring their MVC registrations, paying for the associated fees.

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**EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

The Governor’s Reentry Training & Employment Center

The Governor’s Reentry Training & Employment Center in Kearny, NJ, is a generous offering of Wendy Neu of the Hugo Neu Corporation. The facility houses 9 classrooms and conference spaces where NJRC participants receive training in six (6) major certification skill sets: 1) Solar Technology, 2) Construction Industry, 3) CISCO Certification Networking Technician Certification, 4) Automobile Mechanics Training, 5) SEIU/Healthcare Maintenance, 6) GED/ high school diploma, as well as, providing private access to Telemedicine and Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT). Private business partners will work in partnership with NJDOL accredited training vendors to provide a substantive
apprenticeship training. NJRC’s Legal Department has secured agreements with Bright Horizon Institute, Hudson County Community College, National Career Institute, New Jersey City University, and Solar One.

**NJRC’s Summer Internship Program**

The New Jersey Reentry Corporation’s Legal Services Department worked with 16 summer interns who started in May 2021. The interns, both undergrad and graduate students, included some who plan on attending law school and are interested in helping our program participants overcome the barriers that are commonly confronted upon release from incarceration. The interns are attending schools such as New York University, Columbia University, Villanova University, Tufts University, Rutgers University, Rutgers Law, Fordham University, Rowan University, Fairleigh Dickinson University, and The College of New Jersey.

**NJRC’s Sixth Annual Immigration Conference**

NJRC held their Sixth Annual Immigration Conference on September 15, 2021 through Zoom. The distinguished conference panelists discussed several emerging immigration matters relating to green card renewal with a criminal record, family separation, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, Temporary Protection Status, asylum and refuge, Immigration and Custom Enforcement, and the legal services that the NJRC provides to our participants facing immigration concerns.

**TESTIMONIALS**

Our Program Participants frequently express their appreciation of the services they receive through NJRC’s Legal Services Department. Some testimonials from our program participants are provided below.

“My name is Vinicio Vega Hernandez and I would like to say that I am really appreciative of the knowledge that I have obtained and the help that has been offered to me from the NJ Reentry corporation program. The staff is excellent and exceptional. They have helped me with school for
solar energy, employment and, most of all, with legal matters such as voter’s rights, obtain my ID and to the restoration of my license which I would really thank Juan (Ray) Sanchez. He also helped me get through my court dates, recall an outstanding warrant and get over $500 of fines dismissed. I would recommend the NJ Reentry corp program to anyone.” -Vincio H.

“Your legal services have helped me a lot. I got my birth certificate, and my ID. It really helped me put pieces of my life back together.” - Jamie P.

“I’m very grateful for this program (NJRC) and its services. They didn’t hesitate in helping me get my warrants recalled and my driver’s license restored. They did a good job and it really is a great program.” - Roderick W.

“Thank you so much for all of your help I swear this is some life-changing stuff right here man I haven’t been the best version of me in a long time and I really appreciate you more than you would ever know” - Jonathan D.

“Thank you so much for your time and efforts to restore my driving privileges. I am very happy to know that the City of Orange and East Orange has vacated the warrants and dismissed my cases.... I am truly thankful for the information, help and assistance you’ve provided thus far. Take care and STAY SAFE!” - Martin R.

“Ms. Zee is very helpful. She gets things done quickly. She helped me to get all identification that I needed and she is very professional. At first, I was not sure about what she would be able to help me with but she helped with everything and I am grateful for that. I got my documents quickly. We are now working on my Driver’s License and I know that I will have it in no time. ” - Karron W.

“Since I came home from prison, being in CRC (Community Resource Center) has helped me with my legal matters more than I can be thankful for. They helped me get rid of all my municipal warrants that dated back from before my incarceration. And also helped me get all of it situated and most of it dismissed or helped me put a payment plan in place. They also helped me get my state ID when I didn’t have my original birth certificate from my country. If it wasn’t for CRC helping me out with this stuff.. I don’t really know how I would’ve gotten it done.” - A. Yousaf

“The CRC program helped me figure out what I needed to do to get my license back. I didn’t know I had other issues that was affecting my license and she helped me address old legal issues in 5 different municipal courts and child support. My case manager helped me get all of them dismissed using my jail credits, change my address with motor vehicle, and figure out how much I need to pay in surcharges before I would be eligible to get my license. She also gave me practice tests to practice for my license test since I had to re-take it because it been so long. I am forever thankful for the help I got and she did more than my personal lawyer did to help me deal with these issues.” - K. Brooks

“The services you guys gave me were the best ever. I’m very thankful. Through NJRC, I was able to obtain my birth certificate and ID along with applying for my social security card. I didn’t know there was a warrant outstanding against me and Ray was able to get it recalled. He was also able to have over $900 in fines forgiven for a different ticket. You changed my life for the better and I appreciate that. I really do thank you so much. I believed in this program and I thank God he let me finish it and never give up. I’m grateful.” - Alicia C.

“To whom it may concern, my name is Kenneth Calamusa and I met Dominic through the New Jersey reentry program after coming home from prison. I asked Dominic to help me with the
impossible... to help me get my driver’s license back that has been suspended for over three decades and tens of thousands of dollars of fines and late fees. I personally thought that it could never be achieved. But I can stand here and tell you that I not only have a driver’s license I also have a motorcycle license and I owe it all to Dominic. He set up all these Zoom Court hearings because all the courthouses were closed down due to the pandemic not to mention he got a lot of my fines dismissed because he’s a very smart person and he’s very very good at what he does. At no time did this man leave my side and he helped me all the way from the beginning all the way through to the end. He happens to be an inspiration to me and I’m very fortunate to have met him. I couldn’t have done it without him.”

**PRO BONO EFFORTS**

NJRC’s Legal Services Department continues to develop its pro bono referral program with New Jersey law firms and pro bono organizations.

**Espíritu Latino**

NJRC’s Espíritu Latino initiative summons the Latino community to celebrate, serve, and support those persons returning from prison, jail, and addiction treatment. Recognizing the historic strengths of faith and family, Espíritu Latino seeks to provide returning persons with the tools required for successful reentry. Espíritu Latino has grown from NJRC’s recognition that an increasing number of court-involved persons are foreign-born, speak English as a second language, or face impossible immigration challenges immediately upon release. Through Espíritu Latino, NJRC offers a bundle of services tailored to the specific needs of the Latino reentry community, including housing assistance, food and clothing, counseling, medical assistance, and high school diploma/ GED, and provide assistance with documentation such as passports and green cards. Additionally, through this important initiative, NJRC has developed partnerships with law offices, attorneys, and legal services organizations to provide critically needed pro bono legal services to our program participants.

**Legal Services**

NJRC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the law firm Klineburger & Nussey to create a program wherein our participants will have access to legal services related to family court matters such as child support and custody disputes.

Our team of pro bono attorneys also continues to provide necessary legal assistance to our program participants in resolving legal issues which create barriers to obtaining and maintain employment. These pro bono attorneys have resolved matters relating to child support, open warrants, fines, birth certificates, and other identification documents to remove.

Additionally, NJRC entered into an MOU with Volunteer Lawyers for Justice (VLJ) with the purpose to develop and expand a framework of cooperation wherein NJRC will refer its program participants to VLJ’s Reentry Legal Services Program for expungement of criminal records.
The New Jersey Reentry Corporation Legal Services Department, led by our General Counsel, Rahat A. Chatha, Esq., CCEP, bridges the gap between our program participants and the judicial, administrative, and other government institutions that can frustrate their job-seeking efforts. We assist participants in navigating the forms, document collection, and other bureaucratic hurdles that must be cleared to obtain original or replacement identification (e.g., MVC driver license, MVC identification card, birth certificate, and social security card), which is essential to secure and retain gainful employment. We further help our participants remove barriers to obtaining identification instruments resulting from fines and warrants through New Jersey Municipal Courts. The Legal Services Department also links our participants to pro bono services for additional legal needs through our established partnerships with pro bono organizations and attorneys.

To view additional resources from our legal department, please visit www.njreentry.org/about/legal-services
'Never Lose Focus,' Says Rahat Chatha of NJ Reentry Corp.

Rahat Chatha, general counsel of the New Jersey Reentry Corp., is an In-House Impact honoree. The below response were lightly edited for style and clarity.

What are some of your proudest achievements of 2020, and why?

Some of my proudest achievements as general counsel for the New Jersey Reentry Corp. (NJRC) include leading a successful legal department team for the benefit of NJRC clients. We have assisted with the vacating of over $40,000 in New Jersey J Municipal Court fines for our clients from November 2020 to April 2021. In 2020, we secured and provided funding for identification documents for over 500 clients. The identification documents include NJ MVC driver’s licenses, MVC non-driver identification cards, birth certificates, and other forms of identification necessary for our clients to live a stable and productive life after incarceration. We obtained 190 MVC identification cards and 375 birth certificates and restored the driving privileges for 140 clients in the year 2020. Our clients require identification documents and birth certificates to obtain additional proper identification, open a bank account, and secure employment and health care services. Additionally, in 2020, we helped clients recall 38 warrants, ensuring their freedom and further removing blockades on their journey towards successful reintegration.

How are in-house counsel roles evolving, and how have you or your team adapted?

The Covid-19 pandemic has presented many challenges to my role as an in-house counsel, but our team has remained flexible to continue to provide critical service for our clients. Pre-pandemic, the legal team engaged in-person meetings. Now, we communicate effectively and frequently through online meeting applications to address client matters and make a determination regarding additional partnerships needed for the benefit of our clients. For example, we have partnered with Legal Services of New Jersey so that our clients can be walked through the expungement process and address their child support arrears. Our ability to adapt in uncertain times is only half of the reason why the legal department is successful. The other reason is that we never lose focus of our primary purpose, which is to assist our clients, who are often from historically disadvantaged communities, flatten the obstacles they face upon their release.

In the traditionally insular role of in-house lawyer, what challenges have you overcome in standing out—in the legal profession at large and within your organization?

A significant challenge of an in-house counsel for a non-profit organization is balancing what is needed by the organization with what is needed by the individuals who we serve. Every day, we are developing partnerships with service providers. Whether the partnerships are with organizations offering vocational training, hospitals that treat substance use issues, or law firms that will provide pro-bono services, these partnerships require negotiation, contract drafting, and determining what is expected from each respective organization. Making sure that these duties are done efficiently is a very important aspect of my position. However, properly delegating and overseeing the legal department is just as important.

What is your best advice for in-house lawyers trying to make an impact, with their corporate clients, their communities, and beyond?

An important part of being an in-house counsel is remembering that two different duties exist. By sharing some of this oversight with the legal services project manager, I am able to complete my duties owed to the organization as well as the duty that is owed to our clients. Each legal service coordinator in all of our nine sites statewide provides me with weekly statistics and updates on outreach initiatives. This allows me to spot trends throughout the organization and address them promptly and effectively.
The Legal Department has solidified partnerships and entered into MOUs and Agreements with the following entities to continuously provide a robust array of needed services for NJRC participants:

**Training and Employment Services**

- 1Huddle, Inc.
- Bergen County One-Stop Career Center
- Bergen Probation Division Community Service Program
- Bright Horizon Institute
- City of Newark
- Community Food Bank of New Jersey
- County of Essex Correctional Facility
- County of Essex Correctional Facility and New Jersey State Parole Board
- County of Passaic
- County of Union/ Union County Department of Corrections
- Dress For Success
- Essex County Division of Training and Employment and Essex County One-Stop Career Center
- Foodbank of Monmouth and Ocean Counties, Inc. d/b/a Fulfill
- Hudson Probation Division Community Service Program
- Immanuel Community Learning Center
- LAZ Parking
- Mainstream Recovery
- Mercer County One-Stop Career Center
- Middlesex County Office of Career Opportunity
- Middlesex County Probation, Division of Community Service Program
- Monmouth County Workforce Development
- Monmouth County Probation Division of Community Service Program
- Montclair State University
- Morris County Organization for Hispanic Affairs
- National Career Institute
- Newark Workforce Development Board
- New Jersey City University
- New Jersey Coalition of Automotive Retailers
- Ocean County PIC, Inc.
- Operation HOPE
• Passaic County One-Stop Career Center
• Prevention Links
• RENEW Life Center
• Rising Tide Capital
• Solar One
• Township of Woodbridge, as Administrator of the Recovery Employment Solutions - Education and Training
• Union County One-Stop Career Center
• United Counties Economic Development Corporation

Federally Qualified Healthcare Centers

• Alliance Community Healthcare, Inc.
• Eric B. Chandler Health Center
• Metropolitan Family Health Network, Inc.
• Newark Community Health Center
• Neighborhood Health Services Corporation
• North Hudson Community Action Corporation
• Ocean Health Initiatives, Inc.
• Paterson Community Health Center

Medically Assisted Treatment Services

• CPC Behavioral Healthcare
• Bergen New Bridge Medical Center
• CarePlus New Jersey
• Discovery Institute
• Integrity House
• Intervention Specialist
• Ocean Mental Health Services
• Real House, Inc.

RWJ Barnabas Health Institute for Prevention and Recovery Support Team for Addiction Recovery

• Seashore Family Services of New Jersey
• Sunrise Clinical Services
• Straight & Narrow, Inc.
• Trinitas Regional Medical Center
• Turning Point
• University Behavioral Health Care

Additional Healthcare Services (including mental and behavioral healthcare services)

• Advanced Behavioral Care Services
• Advocacy for Emotional Behavioral Disorders
• Buddies of New Jersey, Inc.
• Jersey City Medical Center, Center for Comprehensive Care
Mental Health Association in New Jersey

- Newark Beth Israel Medical Center
- New Hope Integrated Behavioral Health Care
- Planned Parenthood of Northern, Central and Southern New Jersey, Inc.
- Parker Family Health Center
- Prevention Links Support Team for Addiction Program
- Prevention Is Key, Inc.
- Recovery Advocates For The Shore
- University Hospital
- Advocacy for Emotional Behavioral Disorders

Advocacy Services

- League of Women Voters of New Jersey
- National Action Network
- The Newark Museum of Art
- The New Jersey Coalition of Latino Pastors and Ministers & Ministerio El Sol Sale Para Todos Internacional
- Women Who Never Give Up, Inc.
- Espiritu Latino
- Community Affairs & Resource Center
- La Casa Dominicana De New Jersey
- Council on American-Islamic Relations - New Jersey

Legal Services

- Central Jersey Legal Services, Inc.
- Council on American Islamic Relations – NJ
- Klineburger & Nussey
- Volunteer Lawyers for Justice
- Law Office of Frank & Pollack, LLC

Miscellaneous (Outreach, Research, Therapeutic, and Other Social Services)

- Helen Keller Institute
- Hope Social Services Agency
- La Magia de Las Bellas Artes
- New Jersey Department of Corrections
- New Millennium Bank
- Sean K. Wilson Ph.D. and Jason M. Williams, Ph.D.
- Suzanne Herrmann, LCSW, LLC
- YWCA Union County