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## **LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF MID-NEW YORK, INC. (LASMNY), PROTECTS MIGRANT WORKERS ACROSS NEW YORK STATE DURING FALL HARVESTING SEASON**

Each year, visiting farmworkers travel to New York State to harvest apples, peaches, and grapes, among other crops. However, this year, due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, these essential workers face additional safety concerns due to crowded living conditions that make it easy for the virus to spread.

Enter the Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc. (LASMNY). The non-for-profit law office proudly serves and represents migrant farmworkers across New York State via its Farmworker Law Project.

The Farmworker Law Project provides legal assistance to migrant and seasonal agricultural workers statewide. The Farmworker Law Project staff give farmworkers and their families help on legal issues that include wage claims, substandard housing conditions, immigration matters, trafficking, and—crucially during the pandemic—workplace health and safety.

"We recognize how essential migrant workers are during COVID-19. They ensure the food supply in this country continues to feed Americans. It is crucial that these individuals stay safe and healthy and know their rights," Andrea Ortega, Esq., Managing Attorney, said.

Both growers, farm owners, and operators and seasonal workers should take pandemic safety seriously. The New York State Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture and Markets have been sending out mobile testing teams to the five counties with the highest influxes of seasonal workers. In New York, everyone must wear a mask when in public or at work when unable to keep 6 feet away from other people.

"Some workers may be worried that if they report they are sick, they will have to stop working and won't be paid for that time off. Some may even worry they will be fired or retaliated against. It is important that if workers are sick, they stop work and report it immediately so they don't get their coworkers and friends sick as well. Most workers, including those who are not U.S. citizens, will be entitled to paid sick leave for up to two weeks if they have COVID-19. Further, employers cannot fire or otherwise punish workers for being sick. Employers should be isolating sick workers in separate housing and ensuring they have access to food, water, medication, and a doctor. If a coworker has been sick, workers should insist to their employer that the coworker be isolated in separate housing and that all spaces where the sick worker has been be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected," Alaina Varvaloucas, Esq., Staff Attorney, said.

If you are a migrant worker facing legal issues related to COVID-19, LASMNY can help you through our Farmworker Law Project. LASMNY can help you obtain paid sick leave, combat retaliation, and advise you on safety issues at your workplace. LASMNY can also advise you on how to sign up for health insurance and how to get tested for COVID-19.



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For more information, or to apply for services, please visit the Farmworker Law Project website at <https://www.lasmny.org/farmworker>. LASMNY also has more information for workers about COVID-19 and their rights on the FLP Facebook page (@farmworkerlawproject). You can also reach a staff member, toll-free, from the United States at 1-800-804-8575, from Jamaica at 1-800-248-2429, or from Mexico at 001-877-248-2429.

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The Legal Aid Society of Mid-New York, Inc. is a not-for-profit law office. LASMNY provides free civil legal information, advice, and representation to people who cannot afford a lawyer. We serve thirteen counties, including Broome, Cayuga, Chenango, Cortland, Delaware, Herkimer, Jefferson, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Onondaga, Oswego, and Otsego. We also serve agriculture workers anywhere in New York State. For more information, visit [lasmny.org](http://lasmny.org).

LASMANY has offices in Utica, Syracuse, Binghamton, Watertown, Oswego, Oneonta, Cooperstown, and New Paltz

**Utica Office**

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**Syracuse Office**

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Syracuse, NY 13202

**Binghamton Office**

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**Watertown Office**

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**Oswego Office**

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**Oneonta Office**

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**New Paltz Office (Farmworker Law Project)**

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