

For Immediate Release

**For More Information: New York Legal Assistance Group (212) 750-0800
Constance Carden, Esq., extension 123
Randal Jeffrey, Esq., extension 182**

Class Action to Help Immigrant Residents Access Food Stamps

(June 24, 2002) Today, the New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) is filing an action against the New York State Office for Temporary and Disability Assistance, on behalf of immigrant state residents who are denied state-funded food stamps. *Teytelman v. Wing* challenges the state's restrictions on certain classes of resident immigrants, who arrived after August 22, 1996 (the date of the Welfare Reform Act) who need food stamps. NYLAG and its co-counsel, *****, are representing low-income immigrant residents who are under 18, elderly, disabled, or victims of domestic violence.

NYCHA's failure to provide plaintiffs with assistance in locating accessible housing in which they can use their Section 8 vouchers.

The purpose of the Section 8 program is to provide housing subsidies for low-income families. By law, people with disabilities cannot be denied these services. NYLAG is seeking to enjoin NYCHA to ensure that it establishes and enforces procedures for assisting plaintiffs in locating available and accessible housing units whose landlords will accept their Section 8 vouchers.

The three named plaintiffs in *Bennett v. NYCHA* are living in unstable housing situations while waiting to use their Section 8 vouchers. Two of the plaintiffs are facing eviction and one is residing in a shelter. NYCHA has done little more than provide the plaintiffs with lists of apartments, most of which turned out to be inappropriate for their needs. Without assistance from NYCHA, the plaintiffs are unlikely to find suitable housing on their own.

According to NYLAG special litigator Jane Greengold Stevens, "if a Section 8 voucher holder is having difficulty locating housing, NYCHA is required by federal law to provide assistance." NYCHA is violating the rights of the plaintiffs by (1) failing to provide a current listing of available accessible units; (2) failing to otherwise assist plaintiffs in locating available accessible units; (3) failing to make reasonable efforts to encourage participation in the Section 8 program by landlords with accessible

apartments; and (4) failing to offer to place plaintiffs on public housing waiting lists when they apply for Section 8 vouchers.

New York Legal Assistance Group (NYLAG) provides free legal assistance to New York's most at-risk, low-income populations, including the elderly, immigrants, victims of domestic violence, children with special needs, people with HIV/AIDS and others seeking their rights.