



## Disaster Legal Services

FEMA, through an agreement with the Young Lawyers Division of the American Bar Association, provides free legal help to disaster survivors through the request of the state, local, tribal or territorial governments. The Disaster Legal Services (DLS) program is authorized under section 415 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, Public Law 93-288, 42 U.S.C. 5182, as amended, when the President declares a major disaster that includes Individual Assistance (IA).

DLS provides confidential free legal assistance to low-income survivors who were directly affected by the Presidentially declared major disaster, meet the definition of low-income, and do not have the means to hire an attorney. Low-income refers to survivors who have insufficient resources to secure adequate legal services, whether the insufficiency existed prior to or resulted from the major disaster.

DLS attorneys are volunteers who provide survivors with legal counseling and advice, and when appropriate legal representation for non-fee generating cases; they are not FEMA employees. Any services or conversations that occur between a survivor and one of the attorneys are confidential and will not be shared with FEMA. If volunteer attorneys are unable to assist survivors with their legal needs due to topic and/or time that would generate a fee, survivors will be referred to independent attorneys who can provide pro-bono or low cost services through the lawyer referral network in the impacted area.

Services typically provided include:

- Help with insurance claims for doctor and hospital bills, loss of property, loss of life, etc.
- Drawing up new wills and other legal papers lost in the disaster.
- Help with home repair contracts and contractors.
- Advice on problems with landlords.
- Estate administration, including guardianships and conservatorships.
- Consumer protection matters, remedies, and procedures.
- Preparing powers of attorney and guardianship materials.
- FEMA appeals and other disaster-related actions against the government.

*FEMA's Mission: Helping people before, during, and after disasters.*

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