



FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR GEORGIA DISASTER SURVIVORS

February 9, 2017. A toll-free legal aid hotline is now available to survivors of Georgia's recently declared disaster areas in **Berrien, Crisp, Cook, Dougherty, Thomas, Turner, Wilcox, and Worth counties**. The service, which allows callers to request the assistance of a lawyer to aid in disaster related matters, is a partnership between the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, the State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division, Georgia Legal Services Program and Atlanta Legal Aid Society.

Survivors facing legal issues who are unable to afford a lawyer may call **1-866-584-8027 (toll-free) or (404) 527-8793 (local)** between 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday, to request assistance. When connected to the hotline voicemail, callers should identify that they are seeking disaster-related legal assistance, brief details of the assistance needed and in which county they are located. Individuals who qualify for assistance will be matched with Georgia lawyers who have volunteered to provide free legal assistance.

Survivors may also request assistance online by emailing yld@gabar.org.

The types of legal assistance available include:

- Assistance with securing FEMA and other government benefits available to disaster survivors;
- Assistance with life, medical and property insurance claims;
- Help with home repair contracts and contractors;
- Replacement of wills and other important legal documents destroyed in the disaster;
- Assistance in consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures;
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems; and
- Counseling on landlord-tenant problems.

Background

When the President declares a major disaster, FEMA, in cooperation with the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, establishes a toll-free number for disaster survivors to request legal assistance. Funding for the toll-free line comes from FEMA under the authority of Section 415 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Public Law 100-707). The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division in turn collaborates with state bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteers in affected areas to handle survivors' cases.

Survivors should be aware that there are limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a fee (i.e., those cases where attorneys are paid part of the settlement by a court). Such cases are referred to a local lawyer referral service.

Currently disaster relief services are available to survivors in the Georgia counties that have been declared major disaster areas. **For survivors seeking legal assistance outside of the declared counties, please contact Georgia Legal Services Program at (800) 498-9469 or Atlanta Legal Aid Society at (404) 524-5811.**

Partner Members

The following organizations have joined forces to establish a toll-free phone line for Georgia disaster survivors to request free legal assistance and to provide volunteer attorneys to handle cases arising from the recent disaster in **Berrien, Crisp, Cook, Dougherty, Thomas, Turner, Wilcox, and Worth counties.**

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division

(http://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers.html) – The ABA YLD, the largest national organization of young lawyers, provides leadership in serving the public and the profession, and promotes excellence and fulfillment in the practice of law. Its parent organization, the ABA, is the national voice of the legal profession and the largest voluntary professional membership group in the world.

State Bar of Georgia Young Lawyers Division (www.georgiayld.org) – The Young Lawyers Division (YLD) of the State Bar of Georgia is a professional service organization comprised of all members of the Georgia Bar in good standing under 36 years of age, or those admitted to the Georgia Bar as their first bar within the past 5 years. The YLD coordinates various programs across the state designed to serve the public, advance the legal profession or both.

Georgia Legal Services Program (www.glsp.org) – GLSP is a non-profit law firm serving rural and small town Georgia. They offer free legal services in civil cases to people who cannot afford to hire a lawyer. With 11 offices around the state, they can serve people where they live. Their work ensures that low-income people have access to justice and opportunities out of poverty.

Atlanta Legal Aid Society (www.atlantalegalaid.org) – Atlanta Legal Aid Society helps low-income people meet basic needs through free civil legal services. Their mission is “to deliver legal services and legal education designed to improve the social, political, and economic conditions of low-income persons; to serve as a catalyst for social change to benefit low-income persons; to prepare and furnish information to low-income persons about their rights so as to provide full benefit, enjoyment, and protection of their legal, economic, and social rights.”

National Disaster Legal Aid Online (www.disasterlegalaid.org) – NDLA is a collaborative effort of Lone Star Legal Aid, the American Bar Association, the Legal Services Corporation, the National Legal Aid and Defender Association, and Pro Bono Net.

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