



JOINT PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release – August 17, 2017

FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR MIDLAND, ISABELLA, BAY, AND GLADWIN, MICHIGAN FLOOD VICTIMS

A toll-free legal aid hotline is now available to victims of Michigan's recently declared flood disaster in Midland, Isabella, Bay, and Gladwin Counties. The service, which allows callers to request the assistance of a lawyer to aid in flood-related matters, is a partnership between the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, the State Bar of Michigan, the State Bar of Michigan Young Lawyers Section, Lakeshore Legal Aid, and Legal Services of Eastern Michigan.

Flood victims facing legal issues who are unable to afford a lawyer may call **1-800-418-8315** between 9:00am and 5:00pm, Monday through Thursday and 9:00am and 3:00pm on Friday, to request assistance. When connected to the hotline, 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 Michigan lawyers who have volunteered to provide free legal assistance.

The type of legal assistance available includes:

- Assistance with securing FEMA and other government benefits available to disaster victims;
- 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.

Flood victims may also visit <https://mi.freelegalanswers.org/> to receive free legal assistance online. Individuals who qualify for this service can ask a volunteer attorney questions online and receive a written response.



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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 victims 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 100-107). The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, in turn, partners with state bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteers in affected areas to handle victims' cases.

Victims should be aware that there are limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a fee (e.g., 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 flood victims in Midland, Isabella, Bay, and Gladwin Counties. **Low-income flood victims seeking legal assistance outside and surrounding Midland, Isabella, Bay, and Gladwin Counties may contact Legal Services of Eastern Michigan 1-800-322-4512 to find out if they qualify for free legal assistance. For all other flood victims, contact the State Bar of Michigan lawyer referral service at 1-800-968-0738.**

Partner Members:

The following organizations have joined forces to establish a toll-free phone line for Midland, Isabella, Bay, and Gladwin, Michigan disaster victims to request free legal assistance and to provide volunteer attorneys to handle cases arising from recent flooding.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division: The ABA YLD is the largest national organization of young lawyers that provides leadership in serving the public and the profession, and promotes excellence and fulfillment in the practice of law. Its parent organization, the American Bar Association, is the national voice of the legal profession and is the largest voluntary professional membership group in the world.

(www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers.html)

State Bar of Michigan: Established in 1935, the State Bar of Michigan is composed of more than 45,000 practicing attorneys and judges. The mission of the State Bar is to improve the administration of justice, promote the legal profession, and build public understanding of



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our legal system. For more information, visit www.michbar.org. Follow SBM on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter @MIStateBar](#). If you are a member of the State Bar, join our group on [LinkedIn](#).

State Bar of Michigan Young Lawyers Section: The State Bar of Michigan Young Lawyers Section is a professional membership organization. The Section's mission is to sponsor activities of interest and value to young lawyers in Michigan; coordinate activities of the various local young lawyer groups in Michigan; cooperate with, and serve as an integral part of the State Bar of Michigan; cooperate with various local bar associations in the State of Michigan, and the American Bar Association, including its Young Lawyer Division, in the promotion of their programs.

(<http://connect.michbar.org/yls/home>)

Lakeshore Legal Aid: Lakeshore Legal Aid takes pride in providing Southeast Michigan with excellence in advocacy and civil legal counsel since 1966. Our attorneys offer professional legal advice and counseling, document review and preparation, negotiation, mediation, and representation in court to improve the legal status of the men, women, and families we serve.

(<http://www.lakeshorelegalaid.org/>)

Legal Services of Eastern Michigan: LSEM delivers free civil legal assistance to people with limited means. Its mission is to use legal skills to address the causes and effects of poverty. Special emphasis is placed on those issues that affect the survival needs of low-income people. LSEM provides services in 14 Mid-Michigan counties including, Arenac, Bay, Clare, Genesee, Gladwin, Gratiot, Huron, Isabella, Lapeer, Midland, Saginaw, Sanilac, St. Clair, and Tuscola.

(<http://www.lsem-mi.org/>)



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Legal Services of Eastern Michigan

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