



TRLA
Texas RioGrande Legal Aid

ABA
AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION
Young Lawyers
Division

Free legal assistance available for disaster survivors in Cameron and Hidalgo counties

July 20, 2018 — A toll-free legal aid hotline is available to survivors of the federally declared disaster areas in **Cameron and Hidalgo counties** for the storms and flooding that occurred June 18-22, 2018. The American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, State Bar of Texas, and Texas RioGrande Legal Aid are working together to provide legal resources to people and businesses affected by the disaster.

Survivors facing legal issues who are unable to afford a lawyer may call **(866) 757-1570** toll-free to request:

- 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.

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.

Individuals who qualify also may use texaslegalanswers.org — an online Q&A-style service where individuals can pose specific questions related to civil legal issues and have them answered online by volunteer attorneys. Texas Legal Answers is operated by the State Bar of Texas in conjunction with the American Bar Association.

Additional disaster recovery resources are available at texasbar.com/disaster, texaslawhelp.org, and trla.org/disasters.

Background

On July 6, 2018, a Major Disaster Declaration was issued for the state of Texas, making federal funding available for to individuals and business owners in **Cameron and Hidalgo counties**. To register with

FEMA, and if eligible, apply for federal and state disaster assistance, register online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov, via smartphone, or Web-enabled device at fema.gov. Applicants may also call 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY) seven days a week from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. (CT). Applicants should be prepared to provide basic information about themselves, insurance coverage, and any other information to help substantiate the loss.

The deadline to register with FEMA is September 4, 2018.

Barratry or Improper Soliciting

The State Bar of Texas reminds the public that in many cases it is a crime in Texas for a lawyer or someone representing a lawyer to contact a person for purposes of legal representation if the person has not first requested the call or personal visit. The contact is not illegal if the attorney is not seeking payment or has a preexisting professional-client or family relationship with the person being contacted.

If you witness something you believe to be improper solicitation, or barratry, please get the name and phone number of the person making contact and report it to your local law enforcement authority or the State Bar Chief Disciplinary Counsel's Office toll free at **(866) 224-5999**.

Partner Members

The following organizations have joined forces to provide disaster legal resources and to provide volunteer attorneys to handle cases arising from the recent disaster in Cameron and Hidalgo 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.

National Disaster Legal Aid Online (www.disasterlegalaids.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.

State Bar of Texas (www.texasbar.com) – The State Bar of Texas is an administrative agency of the Supreme Court of Texas that provides educational programs for the legal profession and the public, administers the minimum continuing legal education program for attorneys, and manages the attorney discipline system. With more than 100,000 members, it is the second-largest state bar organization in the United States based on active members. The mission of the State Bar of Texas is to support the administration of the legal system, assure all citizens equal access to justice, foster high standards of ethical conduct for lawyers, enable its members to better serve their clients and the public, educate the public about the rule of law, and promote diversity in the administration of justice and the practice of law.

Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (<https://www.trla.org>) – Texas RioGrande Legal Aid (TRLA) is a non-profit organization that provides free legal services to low-income residents in sixty-eight counties of Southwest Texas.

United Policyholders (<https://www.uphelp.org>) - United Policyholders a non-profit 501(c)(3) whose mission is to be a trustworthy and useful information resource and a respected voice for consumers of all types of insurance in all 50 states. UP focuses on helping survivors navigate insurance claims toward a full, fair and prompt settlement, and provides guidance on debris removal, temporary living arrangements, government aid, construction issues, hiring professional help, and deciding how and if to repair, rebuild, or buy a replacement home.

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