

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 16, 2014

Contact:

Jason Hirshon

111 SW Fifth Avenue, Suite 1740

Portland, OR 97204

Phone: (503) 417-7777

Email: jason@slindenelson.com

**Washington Flooding and Mudslide Legal Relief - Free Legal Assistance
Program for Victims**

Partnership between the Snohomish County Legal Services, Snohomish County Bar Association, Northwest Justice Project, The Washington State Association for Justice ABA and FEMA

Washington lawyers have volunteered to provide assistance for anyone affected by the recent Flooding and Mudslide in Oso, Washington. Snohomish County Legal Services, the Northwest Justice Project, the Washington State Association for Justice and the Snohomish County Bar Association are partnering in this effort with FEMA and the ABA Young Lawyers Division. Free disaster-related legal advice and assistance will be available to those impacted in Snohomish County, including the Sauk-Suiattle, Stillaguamish, and Tulalip tribes.

Starting April 9, 2014, those affected by the disaster seeking legal advice can call the toll-free helpline at **1-844-435-7676 (1-844-HELP-OSO)** 24 hours a day and provide contact information and the issues for which legal help is being sought. Applications of persons seeking help will be reviewed and paired with a volunteer attorney who has experience in those areas of the law. Participating programs are also working with collaborating volunteer attorneys to hold onsite clinics later in the month of April. Information has also been posted (and will be updated regularly) at www.nwjustice.org.

The type of legal assistance available includes:

- Assistance with securing FEMA and other government benefits available to those affected
- 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
- Assisting in consumer protection matters, remedies and procedures
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems

- Counseling on landlord/tenant problems

Background

When the U.S. President declares a major disaster, FEMA, in cooperation with the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, establishes a toll-free number for persons affected by the disaster 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 partners with state bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteer lawyers in affected areas to handle cases for those requesting legal aid.

Partnership Members

The following organizations have joined forces to establish a toll-free phone line for those affected by the Washington Flooding and Mudslide to request free legal assistance, and to provide volunteer attorneys to handle cases arising from recent storm damage.

American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division - 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.

Federal Emergency Management Agency - FEMA coordinates the federal government's role in preparing for, preventing, mitigating the effects of, responding to, and recovering from all domestic disasters, whether natural or man-made, including acts of terror. Through an agreement with the American Bar Association, FEMA underwrites the cost of operating toll free legal assistance lines for survivors in areas designated as federal disaster sites.

The Northwest Justice Project (NJP) – The NJP is the statewide civil legal services program funded by the Legal Services Corporation and Washington State to provide free legal services to low income persons. The program also received Older Americans Act funds to serve seniors age 60 or older. NJP operates a statewide toll free hotline, 17 offices around the state of Washington including an office in Snohomish County, and special projects for foreclosure prevention, Native Americans and veterans.

Snohomish County Legal Services (SCLS) - SCLS is a free legal aid program serving Snohomish County residents experiencing poverty. SCLS staff, pro bono attorneys and volunteers provide information, advice and legal representation to ensure meaningful access to justice regardless of individual barriers and needs. SCLS is a non-profit organization. SCLS has been part of the community since 1983. Over the years it has expanded its clinics and classes, and now provides advice and assistance to clients in a variety of civil legal areas of practice. Over 200 pro bono volunteer attorneys

assist through its program by taking cases for direct representation and providing assistance at its clinics. Through the hard work of their 8 person staff, and the assistance of its generous volunteers, SCLS has assisted over 1,200 clients last year.

Snohomish County Bar Association - The Snohomish County Bar Association was formed in the early 1940's as means to exchange information of interest for its members and provide social opportunities for members to interact with each other. As a group it promotes professionalism, service to the public, including pro bono representation, and furtherance of bench-bar relations. The current commitment to community outreach and pro-bono services by its members is measured at one of the highest levels in the State of Washington for our membership size. It has approximately 700 members who many volunteer their time for Snohomish County Legal Services and is very proud and dedicated to deliver pro-bono services locally.

Washington State Association for Justice - The Washington State Association for Justice is a statewide voluntary bar association with the following mission: " We stand up in the courtroom and the halls of government for real people. We defend your Constitutional rights, including the right to have your day in court. We hold corporate and other powerful interests accountable. We are a community creating and sharing resources for our members to secure justice." The association was founded in 1953 and has over 2500 members serving communities across Washington State.