

Life Cycle of an ABA YLD / FEMA Disaster Hotline

When there is a presidentially declared disaster the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD) work together to provide free legal assistance to low-income disaster survivors via a disaster hotline. The legal assistance is immediate and temporary.

- ❖ Natural or man-made disaster occurs.
- ❖ President declares disaster area.
- ❖ FEMA determines that disaster legal services are needed.
- ❖ FEMA contacts a member of the ABA YLD Disaster Legal Services (DLS) Team.
- ❖ The assigned DLS Team Member contacts appropriate ABA YLD District Representative (DR).
- ❖ District Representative determines:
 - Where the hotline will be housed
 - Who will staff the hotline
 - How referrals will be handled
- ❖ Contact occurs between the FEMA Field Office and the ABA YLD District Representative.
- ❖ ABA YLD receives the Letter of Intent (LOI) from FEMA. The initial funding is normally set at \$5,000 which can at times vary in amount depending on the magnitude of the disaster. If costs are expected to exceed the FEMA committed amount the DR needs to reach out to FEMA regional with a copy to the DLS Team Member and the YLD Business Specialist to work out the details of increasing the funding. If funds in excess of the initial allocation are spent without prior approval there is no guarantee that overage will be approved for reimbursement.
- ❖ ABA YLD District Representative establishes hotline and works with FEMA and the ABA YLD to distribute the hotline number via a Press Release, etc.
 - A toll-free number must be used (ABA Chicago office can provide a toll free number if needed – contact the YLD Business Specialist).
 - Voicemail must indicate that the caller has reached “the FEMA / ABA YLD Disaster Legal Services Hotline.” May wish to add ‘in conjunction with _____ State Bar. Voicemail message should be recorded in both English and Spanish.
- ❖ Hotline calls are handled upon receipt or, if more complicated, intake sheet is passed on to referral attorney. Calls eligible for assistance must be:
 - Related to the disaster.
 - From low-income individuals.
 - Not fee-generating.
 - If fee-generating call, must be referred to local or state attorney referral service.
 - If not fee-generating and call is simple, may be handled on the phone by a licensed attorney working the hotline.
 - If complicated, refer to pro bono attorney, who must make contact with the caller with 48 hours.
- ❖ Only attorneys who are licensed in the state may answer legal questions via the hotline. If a call is handled on the hotline, no intake sheet needs to be completed.
- ❖ Attorneys not licensed in the state and all others may only fill out client intake forms which will be sent to attorneys who have volunteered to take pro bono cases.
- ❖ Calls can not be rerouted. Hotline volunteers must travel to the hotline location. .
- ❖ ABA YLD District Representative maintains daily tally of calls and reports totals on a week by week basis to the FEMA Field Officer, with a copy to the DLS Team Member and the YLD Business Specialist.
- ❖ As calls slow down the ABA YLD District Representative works with FEMA and the DLS Team Member to determine appropriate timing and process for terminating the hotline.
- ❖ Final tallies are sent to FEMA Field Officer, with a copy to the DLS Team Member and the YLD Business Specialist.
- ❖ Expense reimbursement requests are sent to the YLD Business Specialist, which will be routed to FEMA Headquarters for their review and approval. Contact the YLD Business Specialist for reimbursement process.