

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of This Document

This document is provided as a resource to attorney volunteers who are fielding questions from those affected by disasters. This document is a starting point and is not intended to be the sole resource for you to rely on in providing legal assistance to those affected by natural disasters. If a matter needs further legal representation that would qualify for submission to the legal aid services organizations or clinics (all of which are based on whether or not the applicant satisfies the intake criteria), you should gather pertinent information as instructed by the organization managing disaster legal services in your area for further processing.

See Table 1 below for information regarding the legal services organizations that may be providing disaster legal services in the different areas.

We would like to thank Texas Legal Services for sharing the work they did to produce the Texas version of this manual which was used to put these materials together. We wish to thank Norah Rogers, Pro Bono Coordinator and the entire law firm of Nelson Mullins for their work to update and make these materials relevant for South Carolina. Without their help these materials could not be made available.

Table 1. Listing of Legal Services Providers

For a complete list of legal services providers please see the South Carolina Bar Foundation available at http://scharfoundation.org/grantees_types/civil-legal-aid/

SLSC Program (South Carolina)	
South Carolina Legal Services 2109 Bull Street Intake: 1-888-346-5592	Statewide LSC program, with eight offices covering all 46 counties. Provides free legal assistance in a wide variety of civil matters to eligible low-income residents of South Carolina. Applications for legal assistance should be made online or in a local office.
SC Bar Pro Bono Programs and Staff Services	
SC Bar Pro Bono Program Columbia, South Carolina Phone: 1-800-395-3425	Volunteer Lawyer Program that works with local attorneys to provide assistance to low income individuals and qualified non-profit organizations.
South Carolina Protection and Advocacy for People with Disabilities (P&A)	
3710 Landmark Drive Suite 208 Columbia, SC 29204 Phone: 866-275-7273 Local: 803-782-0639 TTY: 866-232-4525 You may email P&A at infor@pandasc.org	Advocates legal rights of those with disabilities, no income restrictions.
Charleston Pro Bono Program	
111 Church Street Charleston, SC 29402 Phone: 843-853-6456 Email: info@charlestonprobono.org Web: www.charlestonprobono.org	Provides vital legal needs to Charleston's economically disadvantaged. Areas of practice include Family Law, Life Planning, Housing, Consumer Issues, Public Benefits, and Community Activism.
Charleston Legal Access	
1630 Meeting Street Road Suite 106 Charleston, SC 29405 Phone: 843-640-5980 Email: info@charlestonlegalaccess.org www.charlestonlegalaccess.org	Charleston's first non-profit law firm. Prices are determined on an individual basis by a client's income and family size. Initial screenings and phone consultations are free.
Low Country Legal Volunteers	
Magnolia Village Business Park 181 Bluffton Road, Suite A103 Bluffton, SC 29910	Provides free critical legal services to low income individuals in Beaufort, Hampton, and Jasper counties.

Phone: 843-815-1570
 www.lowcountrylegalvolunteers.com

South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center	
1518 Washington Street. Columbia, SC 29202	
Phone: 803-779-1113 Email: info@scjustice.org	A voice for low income South Carolinians for Social, Legal, and Economic Justice.
One-Eighty Place Homeless Justice Project	
35 Walnut Street Charleston, SC 29403	
Phone: 843-737-8357 Veterans Help: 888-820-1155	Provides an on-site legal clinic to help with legal needs of homeless men and women in Charleston.
Center for Heir's Property Preservation	
1535 Sam Rittenberg Blvd. Suite D Charleston, SC 29407	
Pone: 843-745-7055 Email: info@heirsproperty.org	Delivers legal services to low-income individuals in need of assistance with heirs' property issues.
Sister Care	
P.O. Box 1029 Columbia, SC 29202	
Phone: 803-926-0505 Crisis hotline: 803-765-9428	Provides legal representation at no cost to Midland's battered, indigent women and children.
Hopeful Horizons	
1212 Charles Street Beaufort, SC 29902	
10 Pinckney Colony Road, Ste. 101 Bluffton, SC 29909 Crisis hotline: 1-800-868-2632	Provides assistance for victims of domestic violence in Beaufort, Jasper, Colleton, and Hampton counties. Provides shelter, court accompaniment, adult counseling, children's counseling, and case management.

1.2 The Role of the Volunteer Lawyer

Type of Legal Services Rendered – Following a disaster, volunteer lawyers may be asked to assist in several types of disaster legal relief. While the focus at each location may be different based on the current needs of the survivors, the type of assistance you will be providing is similar. Generally, you may provide the following types of legal services:

1. **Legal Information.** Provide legal information including rights on different matters following a disaster.
2. **Individual Advice or Counsel.** Legal information or advice for a specific issue the survivor is experiencing.

3. **Limited Scope Assistance.** Some survivors will need immediate assistance but limited in scope. For example, the survivor may need assistance with completing a FEMA application or writing a demand letter to a landlord to terminate a lease for a flooded rental.
4. **Direct Representation.** As survivors begin to recover, they will encounter legal issues for which they will need legal representation. The types of legal issues are different depending on the stage of recovery.

You may volunteer at the following types of events or locations:

1. Shelter
2. Disaster Recovery Center (DRC)
3. Phone Banks
4. Legal Advice Clinics
5. Limited Scope Assistance
6. Complete Direct Representation

Based on past experiences with disasters, you may be asked to provide advice on a wide range of issues. Again, the types of legal issues may be different depending on the stage of recovery. Types of issues include—

1. Assisting with filing for emergency assistance,
2. Assisting with insurance claims (life, property, medical, etc.),
3. Counseling on lessor-lessee, homeowner, and other housing problems,
4. Assisting with home repair contracts,
5. Assisting in consumer protection matters, remedies, and procedures,
6. Counseling on mortgage foreclosure problems,
7. Replacing of important legal documents destroyed in the natural disaster, such as wills and green cards,

8. Drafting of powers of attorney,
9. Estate administration (insolvent estates),
10. Tax questions,
11. Preparation for guardianships and conservatorships, and
12. Referring individuals to local or state agencies which might be of further assistance (e.g. consumer affairs).

Nonlegal Services Assistance – Depending on the size and scope of a disaster, disaster legal services may need assistance with practical needs including printing materials for distribution, delivering the materials to different recovery locations, and distribution of materials.

1.3 Information You May Need in Helping the Victims

The type of information you may need will depend on the type of assistance that you are providing. Check with the legal services organization which is managing the disaster legal services location on the type of information you will need to collect. Generally, the organization will have an application which includes the information needed for the type of assistance you are providing.

Generally, you will obtain the following information from the individual you are assisting:

- Full name and the names and ages of family members living with the individual at the time of the disaster,
- Whether they are a plaintiff or defendant in any existing cases (if so, you should assist them in locating their counsel),
- Current address and disaster area address, as well as telephone number(s), including landlines, where the individual may be contacted,
- Description of losses and disaster-related problems,
- Insurance information, and,
- If necessary, for the type of legal assistance you are to provide, citizenship status.

Note: Only U.S. citizens and qualified aliens are entitled to FEMA benefits; however, children born in the U.S. to undocumented aliens qualify for FEMA benefits, while undocumented aliens are entitled to noncash assistance through FEMA, including disaster legal services, emergency food and shelter, and crisis counseling.

For more information, visit: <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2004/06/17/questions-and-answers-undocumented-immigrants-regarding-fema-assistance>.

1.4 Locating Missing Family and Friends

Persons affected by a disaster may notify loved ones of their well-being by registering on the Safe and Well feature of www.redcross.org. Click the “Get Help” tab, and then click “List Yourself as Safe and Well.”

Concerned family and friends can search the list of those who have registered themselves as “safe and well” by clicking “Search for a Family Member.” Another source for information on how to locate a family member or friend affected by a disaster is <https://www.usa.gov/after-disaster> (then go to steps 4 & 5 below) or www.usa.gov, and follow steps 1–5 below.

1. Go to “All Topics and Services” in the top menu.
2. Click the “Disasters and Emergencies” tab.
3. Then click the “After a Disaster” tab.
4. Next, scroll down to the “Find Family After a Disaster” section.
5. Finally, access the “National Emergency Family Registry and Locator System” and “American Red Cross Safe and Well” links.