



**CENTER FOR ARKANSAS
LEGAL SERVICES**



**Arkansas
Association of
Defense
Counsel**



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**FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE
FOR ARKANSAS FLOOD VICTIMS**

July 11, 2019 – As a result of the recent flooding in Arkansas, the Arkansas Bar and the Young Lawyers' Section, in conjunction with FEMA, the Arkansas Emergency Management Agency, the American Bar Association, Center for Arkansas Legal Services, Legal Aid of Arkansas, Arkansas Access to Justice, Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association and Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel is providing free disaster legal assistance efforts to affected individuals who were affected by the recent floods. The toll-free number is **1-800-950-5817** and flood victims may now call the hotline.

FEMA announced that federal disaster assistance has been made available to the state of Arkansas to supplement state and local recovery efforts in the areas affected by severe storms and flooding beginning on May 21, 2019, and ending June 14, 2019.

The President's action makes federal funding available to affected individuals in Conway, Crawford, Faulkner, Jefferson, Perry, Pulaski, Sebastian, Lincoln, and Yell counties. Assistance can include grants for temporary housing and home repairs, low-cost loans to cover uninsured property losses, and other programs to help individuals and business owners recover from the effects of the disaster.

Local legal aid providers and pro bono attorneys will be available to help with the following:

- Assistance 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 lost or destroyed in the disaster;
- Consumer protection to guard against price-gouging and avoiding contractor scams in the rebuilding process;
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems; and
- Counseling on landlord-tenant problems.

Flood victims may call the toll-free number and a volunteer attorney will respond by telephone to answer their legal questions. The goal is to assist as many individuals affected by the floods as possible.

Beware of Fraud

Both FEMA and the Arkansas Attorney General's Office urge Arkansans to be aware of the risk of fraud and common scams in the wake of severe weather. Common post-disaster fraud practices include phony housing inspectors, fraudulent building contractors, bogus pleas for disaster donations, and fake offers of state or federal aid. Arkansans are urged to ask questions and to require identification when someone claims to represent a government agency.

Affected individuals should also keep in mind that state and federal workers never ask for or accept money and always carry identification badges with a photograph. There is no fee required to apply for or to receive disaster assistance from FEMA, the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), or the State. Additionally, no state or federal government disaster assistance agency will call to ask for your financial account information. Unless you place a call to the agency yourself, you should not provide personal information over the phone as it can lead to identity theft.

Those who suspect fraud can call the FEMA Disaster Fraud Hotline at 866-720-5721 (toll free). Complaints may also be made to local law enforcement.

Partnership Members

The following organizations have joined forces to support a toll-free phone line for Arkansas flood victims 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 one of the largest voluntary professional membership groups 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

The Arkansas Bar – (www.arkbar.com) The Arkansas Bar Association is a voluntary, statewide organization with 5,000 members. Among its purposes are the advancement of the administration of justice and the fostering among its members of high ideals of integrity, learning and public service.

National Disaster Legal Aid Online – (<http://www.disasterlegalaid.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.

The Center for Arkansas Legal Services and Legal Aid of Arkansas are the only free civil legal aid organizations in the state. Together, they help more than 12,000 clients each year.

The Arkansas Access to Justice Commission (<https://arkansasjustice.org/>) works to ensure justice for all. That means that all Arkansans get the protections of the law. We research the unmet legal problems of Arkansans, encourage attorneys to do pro bono work for families who are priced out of the legal market, and recommend evidence-based solutions to policymakers.

Since its inception in 1963, the Arkansas Trial Lawyers Association has served as a statewide voice for Arkansas consumers. ATLA's members are attorneys dedicated to protecting the health and safety of Arkansas families. Whether at the State Capitol or the Courthouse, ATLA is fighting to protect Arkansas consumers and to preserve the right to a trial by jury and access to justice for each and every citizen of this great state as guaranteed in our state and nation's constitutions.

The Arkansas Association of Defense Counsel is an organization of lawyers in Arkansas whose work focuses primarily on defense litigation. The AADC strives to bring together Arkansas lawyers who devote a substantial amount of their professional time to the handling of litigated cases and whose representation in such cases is primarily for the defense.

Free Legal Answers (AR.freelegalanswers.org) is a virtual legal advice clinic. Qualifying users post their civil legal question to their state's website. Users will then be emailed when their question receives a response. Attorney volunteers, who must be authorized to provide pro bono assistance in their state, log in to the website, select questions to answer, and provide legal information and advice. Volunteer attorneys will not answer criminal law questions.

United Policyholders (www.uphelp.org<<http://www.uphelp.org/>>) UP is a national nonprofit 501(c)(3) consumer advocacy group that specializes in helping disaster survivors with insurance claim issues.' UP also trains case managers and legal aid lawyers to assist clients with insurance and disaster recovery matters.

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