

**Louisiana State Bar Association Access to Justice Committee’s  
DISASTER PLAN FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE**

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Revised August 2020**

**Introduction**

The purpose of this plan is to assist in the coordinated legal response of Louisiana's Legal Community in the event of a major disaster and proactively provide leadership and guidance in preparing for future disasters.

**Elements of a Successful Disaster Plan**

Past experience and the guidelines suggested by the American Bar Association and Legal Services Corporation have us identify key issues for successful disaster response: (1) **Communication**; (2) **Accessibility to work spaces**, or more specifically, information generally found in those offices; and (3) **Coordination among those providing legal response to the disaster**. Overall, the disaster plan must be adaptable and empower people to respond no matter what the emergency is. Those involved in the development of this plan were the ABA Young Lawyers Division (ABA-YLD) Liaison through FEMA contracts to deliver legal help, the Louisiana State Bar Association's Access to Justice Committee, specifically its Disaster Planning Subcommittee, Louisiana's Legal Services organizations, Louisiana's Pro Bono organizations and other public interest law firms of the state which comprise the membership of the Access to Justice Commission and Committee.

**Who is Responsible for Implementing the Disaster Plan?**

The development and implementation of the disaster plan is the responsibility of the Access to Justice Disaster Leadership Team (DLT). The DLT shall consist of the ATJ Disaster Subcommittee Chair, the Director of Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, the Director of Acadiana Legal Services Corporation, the ABA-YLD Disaster Liaison, the ATJ Committee Chair, the ATJ Director and ATJ Projects Counsel. This group can be expanded or limited depending on the nature of the response needed and an effort should be made to keep this team geographically diverse.

**What is a Disaster? When Should the Plan Take Effect?**

The plan may be implemented when federal or state authorities declare a disaster. It is intended that this plan cover both natural and man-made disasters. It is not necessary that an emergency event be widespread or of a general nature to call for action by the justice community. A disaster may be localized or affect a single Justice Community firm. The Disaster Leadership Team will review circumstances and determine whether the plan should be implemented.

**What is Our Goal if Disaster Strikes?**

Stated quite simply, the Justice Community organizations committed to this coordinated response agree, in the event of a disaster, to prioritize disaster response and do what they legally can to provide legal help to the victims of the disaster and to assist the affected organizational members of the committee to fully resume operations. Disaster relief for both clients and other organizational members will be a priority.

# LOUISIANA DISASTER PLAN FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE

## ELEMENTS OF THE DISASTER PLAN

### A. PRE-DISASTER PLANNING

#### (1) Create the Statewide Disaster Leadership Team (DLT)

The 2019-20 Disaster Leadership Team (DLT) shall consist of:

- ATJ Disaster Subcommittee Chair, Ann Gregorie (Baton Rouge)
- Director of Southeast Louisiana Legal Services, Laura Tuggle (New Orleans)
- Director Acadiana Legal Services Corporation, Greg Landry (Lafayette)
- ABA-YLD Disaster Liaison, T.C. Wicker (Baton Rouge)
- ATJ Committee Chair, Jeff Coreil (Lafayette)
- ATJ Director, Monte Mollere (New Orleans)
- ATJ Projects Counsel, Rachael Mills (New Orleans)
- Additional individuals asked to participate for the 2018-2019 Bar year include:
  - Terri Anderson-Scott, Acadiana Legal Services (Shreveport)
  - Amanda Brown, Lagniappe Law Lab (New Orleans)
  - Davida Finger, Loyola University College of Law (New Orleans)
  - C.C. Kahr, The New Orleans Pro Bono Project (New Orleans)
  - Christy Kane, Entergy Pro Bono Counsel (New Orleans)
  - Walter McClatchy, Acadiana Legal Services (Alexandria)
  - Elena Perez, Southeast Louisiana Legal Services (New Orleans)
  - Sachida Raman, Acadiana Legal Services (Lafayette)
  - Dana Southern, Shreveport Bar Association (Shreveport)
  - Adrienne Wheeler, LA Appleseed (New Orleans)

The Chairperson of the ATJ Disaster Subcommittee (Ann Gregorie) shall serve as the Chair of the Disaster Leadership Team. Before a disaster:

- i. Members of the DLT should participate in disaster response training at least annually in years when the Louisiana Disaster Plan had not been implemented. Members agree to share notices of available training. Should the DLT not implement the disaster response plan for a three-year period, the DLT should plan and oversee a “disaster practice drill.” The plan was last implemented in August 2016.
- ii. The ATJ Disaster Planning Subcommittee will directly develop legal training or work with other programs to ensure DLT members and volunteers are well versed on disaster legal issues.
- iii. The DLT will be responsible for maintaining and updating this plan and reviewing its appropriateness annually.

## **(2) ABA – Young Lawyers Division (ABA-YLD)**

Disaster response in Louisiana, as in most other states, is the responsibility of the state bar association's Young Lawyer Division (LSBA-YLD). The Louisiana ABA-YLD liaison will be encouraged to be a member of the ATJ Committee. The 2018-2019 ABA-YLD liaison is:

Danielle “Dani” Borel  
Breazeale, Sachse & Wilson, LLP  
301 Main St. Ste 2300  
Baton Rouge LA, 70801  
Direct Phone: (225) 381-8047  
Fax: (228) 381-8029  
Email: danielle.borel@bswllp.com

Experience shows that collaboration when responding to a disaster assists those impacted most effectively. To that end, the participants of this plan suggest the following joint efforts:

- i. **Coordinate with LSBA-YLD and Justice Community Groups**
  - a. Ensure that the ABA-YLD Disaster Liaison is knowledgeable and well-connected to the public interest legal community.
- ii. **Identify contacts for government agencies and disaster services**
  - a. The ABA-YLD Disaster Liaison will determine how contact should be made with the FEMA Regional Director and how-to best leverage access to other disaster response organizations for aid.
  - b. The ABA-YLD Disaster Liaison will determine how to gain access to Red Cross and FEMA shelters and Disaster Recovery Centers.
- iii. **Identify the LSBA-YLD District Representatives and ensure updated contact information is available.**
  - a. Up-to-date contact information for the LSBA YLD can be found on the LSBA “Young Lawyers Division Counsel Districts webpage - <http://www.lsba.org/YLD/YLDDistricts.aspx>
- iv. **Develop a knowledgeable volunteer base pre-positioned and committed to responding**
  - a. The ABA-YLD Disaster Liaison will establish contact with the LSBA YLD District Representatives to educate them regarding the need for volunteers to work with their local pro bono programs should a disaster occur. Experience shows the difficulty in obtaining volunteers prior to a disaster

but recognizes the importance of establishing that contact and identifying commitment should the need arise. In the weeks prior to June 1<sup>st</sup>, the ATJ Staff will work with ABA-YLD Disaster Liaison to publicize the year-round need for disaster volunteers.

- b. Attorney volunteers will be directed to local pro bono programs which will handle the administrative tasks to ensure the volunteers identify the volunteer assistance they wish to provide through either:
  - Working in the shelters or disaster recovery centers
  - Or working with the local pro bono program to handle cases and callbacks and that they can be accessed in the event of a disaster
- c. LSBA Staff working with civil legal aid providers will develop online disaster trainings that provide volunteers with free CLE training on disaster response. Pro Bono organizations will provide information on how to access the free CLEs to attorney volunteer.
- d. An additional effort will be made to recruit law student volunteers for the disaster hotline. With the disaster hotline primarily being a referral service, law student volunteers will be able to provide valuable support in order to direct disaster survivors to the appropriate resources.

### **(3) Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA)**

#### **i. Access to Justice Department**

- a. An email listserv ([LaDisaster@mail.lawhelp.org](mailto:LaDisaster@mail.lawhelp.org)) has been established for all public interest personnel. This listserv will be updated every April 1<sup>st</sup> by a request from the web site coordinator (or ATJ projects counsel) to the directors of the public interest organizations represented on the ATJ Committee. All public interest personnel should be encouraged to join the listserv.
- b. LSBA Staff, primarily the Access to Justice Department as well as the IT department, will maintain and update the LSBA Disaster Response Site which acts as a hub for information for the legal community after a disaster. One of the most important features of the site is that attorneys, law firms, non-attorneys, and legal aid organizations can create displacement records that provide up-to-date contact information including location, hours, services provided, contact information as well as other pertinent information. To access the page and submit information, organizations should go to [www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr) and click on “Displacement Resources” link on the right-hand side of the page. After submitting or updating information through this system, it will be visible to public search through the “Displacement Records for Firms, Legal Aid Organizations and Non-LSBA Members” link.

- c. The ATJ Staff working with the DLT will be responsible for maintaining the statewide hotline at the LSBA offices in the Louisiana Bar Center prior to any disaster. The DLT has planned for the for possible relocation to (1) the Baton Rouge Bar Association with the Southeast Louisiana Legal Services' Baton Rouge office as a back-up location; (2) the Lafayette Bar Association with Acadiana Legal Services' Lafayette office as back up; and (3) the Shreveport Bar Association.
- d. The hotline phone system can be accessed through VOIP which only requires an ethernet connection. This hotline uses the HUNT phone system and any backup location must be compatible with this system. ATJ Staff will work with the alternative locations to determine compatibility annually.
- e. ATJ Staff will obtain tentative approval to use LSBA YLD computers (property of the YLD and used for Wills for Heroes) and will be responsible for transporting them to alternative locations.
- f. The ATJ Staff and DLT will develop general information brochures and fliers to advertise the hotline in English, Spanish, French and Vietnamese. This publicity and general outreach information will be made available to the media through the LSBA Communications department, disaster victims and NPOs through the LSBA disaster response page online.
- g. Working with the public interest legal organizations, the DLT will develop a procedure for referring clients to agencies for help which has a back-up plan in the event that the present Internet system cannot be used.

ii. **Legal Aid Organizations**

- a. Each legal aid organization is encouraged to develop a disaster plan for its staff and program. Organizations may wish to consider the following when developing plans:
  - 1. Encourage displaced staff members unable to immediately return to work to complete a displacement record for the LSBA disaster response website ([www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr)).
  - 2. Include a planned publicity/outreach campaign to use in order to reach displaced clients, or in the event that evacuees relocate to the program's service area.
  - 3. If necessary, include the creation of a staff listserv using Probono.net to maintain a reliable electronic way to contact and share non-confidential, non-client documents with all staff members.
  - 4. Identify a program contact person who is authorized to directly respond to requests for assistance from other organizations.

- b. Each legal aid organization is responsible for entering and updating their information on the LSBA disaster response website ([www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr)) by creating a displacement record for their organization.
- c. LSBA Staff and DLT will develop an online training on the Louisiana Disaster Plan which may be a component of an individual organization's staff disaster training.
- d. Organizations can access the LSBA Disaster Page ([www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr)) and submit information. After submitting or updating information through this system, it will be visible to public search throughout the Displacement Resources link.

#### **(4) Communications with State and National Entities**

##### **i. ATJ Contact with State Organizations and Agencies**

- a. The ATJ Disaster Planning Subcommittee will appoint an individual to initiate communication with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness ("GOHSEP") and the Louisiana Attorney General's Office. For the 2018-2019 Bar year, that person is:

Monte Mollere  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
Phone: 504-619-0146  
Email: [mmollere@lsba.org](mailto:mmollere@lsba.org)

- b. Before the disaster, the ATJ Committee should establish a working relationship with GOHSEP to identify how we can work with GOHSEP in the event of a disaster. This information should be reported to the ATJ Committee. GOHSEP keeps up-to-date contact information by Parish Director on its website at <http://gohsep.la.gov/about/parishpa>. The GOHSEP Individual Assistance Officer is:

Veronica Sizer  
Executive Counsel  
Governor's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness  
7667 Independence Blvd. Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70806  
Main - 225-925-7500  
Desk - 225-925-7541  
[Veronica.Sizer2@la.gov](mailto:Veronica.Sizer2@la.gov)

- c. Communication should be initiated with the State Attorney General's Office. This link through the Attorney General's Office should have access to GOHSEP and the State's Emergency Operations Center in the event of a disaster. This person is:

Michael Dupree  
Director, Public Protection Division  
Louisiana Department of Justice  
1885 N 3rd St  
Baton Rouge LA, 70802  
Phone: (225) 326-6400  
Cell: 225-421-9874  
Fax: (225) 326-6497  
DupreeM@ag.louisiana.gov

- d. Participate in the state government's long-term recovery services to develop a relationship with GOHSEP and the Emergency Operations Center.

ii. **Contact with Louisiana Supreme Court**

- a. The designated contact person with the Supreme Court for the LSBA is John Olivier. His contact information is: cell - (504) 583-8241 and email: [jolivier@lasc.org](mailto:jolivier@lasc.org).

iii. **Contact with National Organizations and Agencies**

- a. If possible, immediately before the disaster, the legal service executive directors, disaster response subcommittee chair, and the ATJ department staff will make contact with LSC, NLADA, National Disaster Risk Management (NDRM), FEMA, and the ABA Pro Bono Committee staff in order to remind these groups they are the best contact people following a disaster, identify needs, and to educate these national groups on how they can best help. The contact information for the entire DLT should be provided to these contacts as well.
- b. In recent years, after a federally declared disaster FEMA has coordinated weekly calls with local agencies to understand and quantify the legal needs of disaster survivors, assess the local legal response, and maintain lines of communication between FEMA and the local legal community. ATJ Staff, the Disaster Subcommittee Chair, both legal services Executive Directors, and the ABA/YLD representative should plan to be a part of these weekly calls.

## **B. IMMEDIATELY BEFORE AN IMPENDING DISASTER**

### **(1) The Statewide Disaster Leadership Team (DLT)**

Immediately before an impending disaster, the DLT will meet by phone conference initiated by the ATJ staff, and review team members locations and first steps to implement the plan. A conference call meeting time and date will be determined for after any disaster and all members will be provided conferencing information.



## **(2) ABA – Young Lawyers Division (ABA-YLD)**

- i. Initiate contact with government agencies and disaster services
  - a. The ABA-YLD liaison and/or the disaster leader should initiate contact with FEMA and, as necessary, the Red Cross and Shelters and Disaster Recovery Centers.
- ii. Initiate contact with the LSBA-YLD District Representatives
  - a. The ABA-YLD liaison should initiate contact with each of the LSBA-YLD District Representatives by telephone or email to ensure that the representatives are prepared to assist and organize their district's volunteers.

## **(3) Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA)**

ATJ staff will ensure that the online disaster response page is working properly, and that all materials posted to the website are available for viewing and download.

## **(4) Legal Aid Organizations**

- i. The legal service executive directors should contact the LSC and NLADA.
- ii. If appropriate, program personnel should enter their contact information through the Create a Displacement Record link on the disaster response website ([www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr)), and make contact with other Justice Community Programs in the area where they may be displaced.

## **C. AFTER THE DISASTER**

### **(1) The Statewide Disaster Leadership Team (DLT)**

- i. The DLT will be responsible for implementing the plan, monitoring its effectiveness and discussing needed plan changes with the LSBA to make the response more effective. This includes:
  - a) Distributing the Disaster Hotline phone number, ATJ listserv, and website information to DLT members,
  - b) Providing leadership in responding to the disaster, addressing issues that arise from the disaster,
  - c) Coordinating the Justice Community efforts to respond to the disaster,
  - d) Identifying projects and resources to improve the disaster response,
  - e) Monitoring the implementation of the disaster plan,
  - f) Keeping a journal on activities of the committee and unanticipated obstacles encountered, and
  - g) Maintaining contact with ATJ Committee members and the Louisiana Justice Community. This can be done through the ATJ Committee email list as well as

the LADisaster Listserv on probono.net. This communication can be used by participants to communicate either their disaster needs or their ability to aid in disaster response.

## **(2) ABA – Young Lawyers Division (ABA-YLD) Liaison**

- i. Following a presidentially-declared disaster, FEMA will contact a member of the ABA-YLD Disaster Legal Services Team, who will contact the ABA-YLD liaison for Louisiana (Danielle Borel). The ABA-YLD liaison will provide FEMA and the ABA-YLD Disaster Legal Services Team information about the disaster hotline.
- ii. The ABA-YLD liaison will remain in contact with FEMA and the ABA-YLD to:
  - Distribute the disaster hotline number.
  - Share knowledge about what parties are doing.
  - Identify gaps in the service to clients.
  - Seek to develop strategies to fill those gaps.
  - Work with pro bono organizations that participate on the ATJ Committee to discuss with the ABA-YLD providing volunteer attorneys to the disaster efforts to
  - The ABA-YLD liaison will keep a journal regarding efforts to implement disaster services and unexpected obstacles.
- iii. The ABA-YLD Liaison will work with the ATJ Staff to solicit volunteers through the LSBA YLD District Representatives and to address those needs and other responsibilities as outlined in this disaster plan. ATJ Staff will facilitate this call as needed.
- iv. The ABA-YLD liaison will report updates to FEMA and the ABA-YLD Disaster Legal Services Team.

## **(3) Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA)**

- i. The LSBA and ABA YLD Liaison be responsible for establishing the hotline subsequent to a disaster.
- ii. The hotline will serve as the primary access point for responding to victims.
  - a) The disaster response hotline will be established at the LSBA offices located in the Louisiana Bar Center if possible. (See 3(i)(c) for alternative locations)
  - b) The disaster hotline number is: **1- 800 310-7029**, this is the same number previously used by the Louisiana Civil Justice Center.
  - c) The disaster hotline will initially direct individuals to the appropriate civil legal aid organization, the LSBA Find Legal Help page or accept voice mail for a return phone call that will provide the caller with a referral to the appropriate civil legal aid organization.

d) Legal advice will not be provided through the hotline

e) Recordings will provide the following options:

1. Directing callers to the appropriate legal service organization in their parish. This will be either:

10) Acadiana Legal Service Corporation or

11) Southeast Louisiana Legal Services

2. Directing callers to the LSBA Find Legal Help page for information on how to get an attorney. This page provides the full spectrum of legal services available in the state, from hiring an attorney through the LSBA directory to available online legal resources.

3. Accepting voice messages from callers. The message must explain that the other options may be quicker, that the return call will not be from an attorney and return phone calls will only provide referral information. Callers will be asked to leave the following information in their voicemail.

10) Name

11) Location

12) Call back number

13) Brief description of the legal issue

f) Volunteers

1. LSBA, ABA-YLD Liaison and Pro Bono Organizations will work to recruit volunteers for various volunteer opportunities:

2. For the disaster recovery centers

3. For [LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org](http://LA.FreeLegalAnswers.org)

4. And for local pro bono programs that will be responding to disaster victims' legal needs.

- b. Law student volunteers will be the main source of volunteers for listening and returning voicemails left on the disaster hotline voicemail system.

g) Reporting Requirements

1. FEMA requires weekly reporting on the number of calls received through the hotline and the number of volunteers donating their time to the disaster efforts, either through the hotline or at the DRCs.
  2. LSBA ATJ Staff will be responsible for coordinating collection of that data.
  3. The telephone system will be able to track the number of calls to the hotline and the pro bono programs can report the number of volunteers working in the DRCs.
- iii. The DLT will work with the LSBA Communications Department to develop information for the public and media as appropriate.
  - iv. The LSBA Staff liaisons are Monte Mollere and Rachael Mills for ATJ issues, and Ashley Cambre for technology issues. The LSBA Communications Department Director Kelly Ponder, will be integral to dissemination of information to the public and disaster victims and will work with the ATJ Disaster Leadership Team to provide services as needed. The LSBA Communications Department maintains a media contact list which can be used for distribution of information.
  - v. In addition to media contacts, the LSBA will be responsible for contacting state personnel at DCFS and GOEA and providing them with information that can be disseminated throughout the state.
  - vi. The displacement record section and Public Interest Organizations link on the LSBA's Disaster Response web page ([www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr)) will serve as the clearinghouse for basic information about legal aid organizations for both staff and the public including location, hours, services provided, contact and other pertinent information.

#### **(4) Legal Aid Organizations**

- i. The organizational displacement record on the LSBA website ([www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr)) should be updated after the disaster to include information such as office closures, current office locations, hours of operation, services provided and access to services for displaced clients, and any other critical information the organization wishes to convey to the public. Information should be updated once plans are finalized to reopen an office that has been closed. The DLT will share this information with program committee members and the public as deemed appropriate.
- ii. To access the page and submit information, organizations should go to [www.lsba.org/dr](http://www.lsba.org/dr) and click on the icon that says Displacement Resources. After submitting or updating information through this system, it will be visible to public search through the "Displacement Records for firms, Legal Aid Organizations, and Non-LSBA members" feature.

- iii. Legal aid organizations should ask any evacuees they come in contact with if they are presently a client of another legal aid organization. If so, they should find out the specific advocate who was handling the case. They should also record any contact information the evacuee can provide, including the name and contact information of a relative or friend who will probably continue to know their whereabouts even if they have to relocate again. They will also ask the evacuee if they have any requests regarding the handling of their case. This information will be passed on to the relevant program and the specific advocate when possible.
- iv. Staff should contact a Louisiana legal aid organization in the area in which they are relocated.
- v. If program staff has been displaced and/or offices closed, staff will be assigned to other public interest law offices in Louisiana to assist with their efforts to serve the victims of disaster if staff is able to arrange or is provided a suitable place to stay.
- vi. For any program whose facilities remain open, be prepared to assist displaced staff members from other programs. Such assistance should include, at a minimum, the offer of space for several days where the staff member can work or make needed contacts, use of a phone, use of the internet and establish information about contacting their director and information about closed offices.
- vii. Implement the program's publicity/outreach campaign to displaced low-income people in your service area.

### **LSBA Staff and ABA-YLD Liaison**

#### **(5) Communications with State and National Entities**

- i. Notify LSC, NLADA, National Disaster Risk Management (NDRM) and the ABA Pro Bono Committee staff who the state disaster liaison is, and probable alternate contact information in the event of displacement by a disaster. This task is presently assigned to Laura Tuggle. In addition, the ABA YLD representative (Danielle Borel) will distribute information about the Louisiana disaster plan, the DLT, and other pertinent contact information to the ABA and communicate with FEMA and Red Cross as needed.

#### **USE OF PLAN WHEN DISASTERS OCCUR IN NEARBY STATES**

To the extent it makes sense, the same steps should be taken when a disaster in a nearby state results in public interest legal staff and/ or low-income legal clients are displaced to our service areas.