



FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR TROPICAL STORM GITA SURVIVORS IN AMERICAN SAMOA

Pago Pago, April 25, 2018 – American Samoa Legal Aid, the American Samoa Bar Association, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (ABA YLD), and other organizations are organizing to help provide free legal and recovery assistance to people affected by Tropical Storm Gita.

A legal assistance hotline (**684-633-3301**) is available to connect low-income individuals affected by the disaster with local legal aid providers who can help with:

- Appealing denials of FEMA applications
- Executing powers of attorney and affidavits necessary for FEMA/SBA benefits;
- Replacement important legal documents destroyed during the disaster;
- Assistance with property insurance claims;
- Counseling on mortgage-foreclosure problems; and
- Counseling on landlord-tenant problems

The hotline hours of operation are 7:30 am to 4:00 pm local time. Please have your FEMA registration and other relevant information when making your call. Callers needing assistance appealing denials of FEMA benefits will be matched with a volunteer attorney through the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, American Samoa Legal Aid or local Bar. All other matters will be handled locally by attorneys from American Samoa Legal Aid, or volunteer attorneys residing in American Samoa.

Please be advised that the deadline to register with FEMA is **May 1, 2018**. Survivors have 60 days to appeal denial of benefits from FEMA. Contact the ASLA/DLS hotline (**684-633-3301**) for assistance or

visit the Pago Pago office of American Samoa Legal Aid, located next to the U.S. Department of Interior National Park Visitor Center, between the hours of 7:30 am to 4:00 pm.

Background

When the President declares a major disaster, the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division, establishes a toll-free number for disaster survivors 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 partners with state bar associations and other legal organizations to recruit volunteers in affected areas to handle survivor's cases.

Survivors should be aware that there are limitations on disaster legal services. For example, assistance is not available for cases that will produce a fee (i.e., those cases where attorneys are paid part of the settlement by a court). Such cases are referred to a local lawyer referral service.

Partner Organizations

The following organizations collaborate to assist disaster survivors through the DLS program:

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 (http://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers.html).

American Red Cross – The American Red Cross prevents and alleviates human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. The American Red Cross, through its strong network of volunteers, donors and partners, is always there in times of need. We aspire to turn compassion into action so that all people affected by disaster across the country and around the world receive care, shelter and hope; our communities are ready and prepared for disasters; everyone in our country has access to safe, lifesaving blood and blood products; all members of our armed services and their families find support and comfort whenever needed; and ...in an emergency, there are always trained individuals nearby, ready to use their Red Cross skills to save lives (<http://www.redcross.org/>).

American Samoa Legal Aid – ASLA provides free civil legal assistance to low income persons in the types of cases listed in the ASLA Priorities such as Minor Guardianship, Name Change, Small Estates, Domestic Violence, Home Foreclosure Defense etc. ASLA has added legal assistance to victims of disasters to its Priorities. ASLA does not provide legal assistance for defendants in criminal cases (<https://www.aslegalaid.org>).

American Samoa Bar Association – ASBA is the licensing body and the official bar association for all of those who practice law in American Samoa. The American Samoa Bar Association serves to promote justice, the rule of law, and the interests of the legal system. We do this through public education, legislative review, promoting the judiciary, and advocating the rule of law. We also offer a legal scholarship to a student that shows exemplary academics and a desire to promote the rule of law in American Samoa (<http://www.asbar.org>).

Legal Services Corporation – LSC is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. LSC promotes equal access to justice by providing funding to 133 independent non-profit legal aid programs in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories. LSC grantees serve thousands of low-income individuals, children, families, seniors, and veterans in 813 offices in every congressional district. Read more about the vital role legal aid plays in a just America (<https://www.lsc.gov/>).

National Disaster Legal Aid – 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, the Texas Legal Services Center and Pro Bono Net, provides information on legal issues related to disasters to the low- and moderate-income public (www.disasterlegalaid.org).

United Policyholders – 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 recovery matters, and for help with flood, wind, hurricane and auto insurance questions (www.uphelp.org).

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