



Tip of the Month November 2025

FYI: Minnesota Disaster Attorney Toolkit

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This year, Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota and Justice North partnered together in early 2025 to update and expand upon the existing *Minnesota Disaster Attorney Toolkit*, originally written by Central Minnesota Legal Services in 2019. Through grant funding provided for disaster relief work by Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies, LSNM and Justice North gathered a working group of legal services stakeholders from around Minnesota to collaborate on this unique resource designed to support legal professional responding to the myriad legal issues, complexities, and nuances that arise after a disaster event.

In Minnesota, legal issues that arise during disaster recovery overlap with many commonly practiced areas of poverty law legal aid attorneys are already familiar with (e.g. housing, family, public benefits, consumer rights, etc.), but they are often exacerbated due to the disruptions to daily life disasters create. According to the LSC Disaster Taskforce, “after disasters, low-income survivors often need help obtaining copies of important documents such as birth certificates, driver’s licenses and Social Security cards to apply for or restore benefits and support. The need for adequate housing is generally a major issue for survivors of most disasters. In addition, low-income and other vulnerable people who need housing after an emergency are more susceptible to scams and price gouging”. *The Minnesota Disaster Attorney Toolkit* was designed with these sorts of frequently experienced disaster-related legal issues in mind. It not only covers more familiar topics, but also delves into disaster-specific occurrences, such as FEMA applications and appeals, to provide guidance on the distinct rules, differences, and timelines that exist in disaster scenarios.

Currently, a large gap exists in the legal aid community’s capacity to dedicate time to serving clients’ needs in the wake of disasters. Disasters directly impact legal professionals who must simultaneously advocate for their clients and communities while also managing their own

personal and organizational recovery. This toolkit is a resource for legal aid staff attorneys responding in the impacted area as well as volunteer attorneys wanting to serve survivors in long term recovery. We encourage all legal professionals to not let unfamiliarity with legal response during disasters to dissuade them from getting involved or taking cases, and instead recommend volunteers utilize *The Minnesota Disaster Attorney Toolkit* to ensure disaster survivors receive fair and equitable treatment under the law.

The toolkit can be found on ProJustice* at: https://www.projusticemn.org/law-library/item.817181-2025_Minnesota_Disaster_Relief_Attorney_Toolkit

**Please note that you will need to create an account with ProJustice in order to access the toolkit. This toolkit is also provided for informational purposes only and is not intended to be a substitute for legal advice from a competent attorney licensed to practice law in your jurisdiction.*