



## NEWS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 20, 2019

#### **Media Contacts:**

Shirley Peng, Managing Attorney, Disaster Relief Project

speng@legalaidofnebraska.org

Direct/Voicemail: 402-435-2161, ext. 302

Milo Mumgaard, Executive Director

Cell: 402-973-2579

### **As flood waters recede, free legal help for Nebraska's low-income flood survivors available through Legal Aid's Disaster Relief Project**

**The destruction caused by the recent flooding is devastating for Nebraska families, communities and our state. Knowing the legal rights, benefits and resources available to low-income survivors of a disaster is crucial to recovery. Legal Aid of Nebraska can help.**

**When disaster strikes, the vulnerabilities of low-income people are amplified, and the need for legal help is even more critical.** Most low-income flood survivors are without adequate insurance, have limited resources, and lack knowledge of their options. Housing, jobs, utilities, health care, transportation, all are turned upside down. Government disaster assistance, if it exists at all, can be a long way off. Scammers and cheats descend, exploiting disaster survivors at a time when they are most vulnerable.

**Legal Aid of Nebraska's Disaster Relief Project offers free legal assistance for low-income survivors of Nebraska's floods, through both online resources and a network of trained volunteer lawyers across Nebraska.**

Survivors of Nebraska's flooding can get free and immediately useful information on our website: [www.disaster.legalaidofnebraska.org](http://www.disaster.legalaidofnebraska.org).

Click on "Help for Disaster Survivors," and find a wealth of resources useful for all flood survivors, and especially for renters, farmers, and Native Americans. Resources include basic disaster-related legal issues (housing, government benefits, insurance, fraud, document recovery, etc.). Special resources have also been developed for low-income survivors of disasters on working with utilities, and dealing with tax issues.

Low-income Nebraskans can apply for direct legal representation two ways:

- Applying online at [disaster.legalaidofnebraska.org/apply](http://disaster.legalaidofnebraska.org/apply), or
- Calling the Disaster Relief Hotline at 1-844-268-5627.

The Disaster Relief Project's objective is to help low-income communities in Nebraska prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters through free legal assistance. The Project is here to help address the civil legal needs of low-income Nebraskans - areas of Legal Aid expertise - both in the immediate aftermath of a disaster and on the long road to recovery.

If you are an attorney and want to volunteer to help low-income disaster survivors, apply at <http://disaster.legalaidofnebraska.com/volunteerapplication.htm>.

In the coming days and months, Legal Aid's Disaster Relief Project is ready to help low-income Nebraskans slammed by the disastrous flooding, gain hope, seize opportunity, and recover as fully as possible through free legal information and assistance.

### **Legal problems may include:**

- **Insurance Issues** including submitting claims, avoiding public adjuster fraud, negotiating insurance settlements, and filing an appeal.
- **Government Benefits** including applying for benefits and/or filing an appeal for denial of benefits, benefit award disagreement, or overpayment notices.
- **Housing (renters)** including identifying your rights as a renter of a damaged unit, facilitating communication with your landlord, negotiating early termination of a lease, resolving issues with renter's insurance claims, and recovering personal items from damaged rental units.
- **Housing (owners)** including negotiating payments, understanding your options in real estate contracts, and obtaining disaster assistance.
- **Contractor Fraud Issues** including hiring a contractor and avoiding fraud, reviewing work contracts/estimates, obtaining proper work permits for repairs, passing city inspection, and recognizing and preventing predatory lending.
- **Document Recovery** including replacing lost documents (driver's licenses, SS cards, EBT cards, etc.) and replacing immigration documents.

### **About the Disaster Relief Project:**

Legal Aid's Disaster Relief Project has developed both a broad set of online resources and a network of volunteer attorneys across the state who will offer free legal assistance to survivors of state-declared disasters. Our attorneys assist disaster survivors with issues such as filing insurance claims; recovering vital documents (birth certificates, marriage licenses, etc.); and many other legal issues you might face as the result of a disaster. We also host disaster preparedness workshops and "know-your-rights" presentations and provide ongoing training and webinars for volunteer attorneys. Legal Aid works with the existing disaster response network to integrate civil legal services as part of a coordinated effort to prepare for, respond to and rebuild after a disaster.

### **About Legal Aid of Nebraska**

[Legal Aid of Nebraska](http://www.legalaidofnebraska.org) was established in 1963 and is the only statewide non-profit civil legal aid provider in Nebraska, providing free, high quality services to low-income Nebraskans in all 93 counties. Legal Aid's mission is *"to promote justice, dignity, hope and self-sufficiency through quality civil legal aid for those who have nowhere else to turn."* Legal Aid's administrative offices are in Omaha, Nebraska.

###