Civil Legal Issues of Natural Disasters: Libraries Can Help

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Chat activity

What natural disasters has your community faced or are you preparing for?
Agenda

- Trauma-informed care
- Library preparation is critical
- Immediate needs and legal issues
- Ways to get assistance
- Most common patron legal questions in a disaster
- Cultivate disaster response network
- Help patrons prepare
- Where to start
September is National Preparedness Month

https://www.ready.gov/september
Trauma-Informed Care

1. HOUSEHOLD
   - incarcerated family member
   - divorce
   - homelessness
   - physical and emotional neglect
   - maternal depression
   - domestic violence
   - bullying
   - alcoholism and drug abuse
   - parental mental illness
   - emotional and sexual abuse

2. COMMUNITY
   - discrimination
   - structural racism
   - violence
   - lack of social capital and mobility
   - lack of jobs
   - substandard schools
   - poor water and air quality
   - food scarcity
   - substandard wages
   - poverty
   - poor housing quality and affordability

3. ENVIRONMENT
   - CLIMATE CRISIS
     - record heat & droughts
     - wildfires & smoke
     - record storms, flooding & mudslides
     - sea level rise
   - NATURAL DISASTERS
     - tornadoes & hurricanes
     - volcano eruptions & tsunamis
   - pandemic

https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/3-realms-of-aces-updated
Trauma-Informed Care

- Patrons may need to talk first before getting to their need
- No choice in much of process
  - Offer choices if you can
- Slow down, listen empathetically, break things down into simple steps
- You might need to take breaks and process hearing traumatic stories over and over

https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/3-realms-of-aces-updated
Library preparation is critical

Want to reopen quickly

Continuity of operations plan

Can even assist if not open
Immediate needs and legal issues

- Food, shelter, water
- Power, wifi
Immediate needs and legal issues

- Landlord / tenant issues surface fast
- Finding information, e.g. deed to my house
Ways to get assistance

- **FEMA** – safe and habitable standard
- **Insurance** – if patron has, must use it first
- **SBA** – Small Business Administration
  - Homeowners and renters can get low-interest, long-term loans for losses not fully covered by insurance

Dependencies between these 3 are complex and important
Ways to get assistance

• Encourage patrons to document everything
• Appeals are possible
• Many resources to help library staff and patrons
Most common patron legal questions in a disaster

- Landlord-tenant issues
- FEMA applications
- Insurance queries
Legal issues timeline – the first 6 weeks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>Document Replacement</th>
<th>Income Protection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lease termination</td>
<td>Birth certificates</td>
<td>Wage theft issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utility shutoffs</td>
<td>Driver’s licenses</td>
<td>Unemployment application/appeals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security deposits</td>
<td>Social security cards</td>
<td>Public benefits application/appeals</td>
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<td>Repair issues</td>
<td>Deeds</td>
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<td>FEMA applications</td>
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<td>U.S. Small Business Administration disaster loan applications</td>
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<td>Insurance claims</td>
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<td>FEMA Appeals</td>
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Legal partners

Partners: find your local legal aid – lawhelp.org

Disaster Legal Services– Central hotline 888-743-5749

ABA’s Free Legal Answers – freelegalanswers.org
Cultivate disaster response network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Start in blue sky times</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local emergency management</td>
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<tr>
<td>COADs (Community Organizations Active in Disaster) and VOADs (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local bar association – volunteer lawyers specializing in disasters</td>
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Help patrons prepare

Disaster preparation events with partners

Ready.gov

LADRC.org
Legal Aid Disaster Resource Center

Being prepared can prevent legal headaches later
Where to start

1. Reach out to key players
2. Build a disaster resource collection
3. Plan a disaster preparation event
WebJunction’s free 3 course series

- **Course 1: Disaster Response Network** launched!
- **Course 2: Trauma Response and Disaster Assistance** launched!
- **Course 3: Ongoing Issues and Mitigation**, coming soon!
- If civil legal reference is new to you – try our foundational 4 course series, **Creating Pathways to Civil Legal Justice**

[oc.lc/legal-justice-project]
Improving Access to Civil Legal Justice through Libraries

Through OCLC’s partnership with Legal Services Corporation (LSC) and consultation from law librarians, WebJunction continues to design and deliver national training for U.S. public library staff to strengthen their ability to identify and refer patrons with legal issues to legal aid organizations. Through this initiative, WebJunction is working to ensure that library staff can refer patrons to a legal aid organization that can help.

New Courses

A new course, Creating Pathways to Civil Legal Justice, explores how library staff can identify legal issues that affect their communities and how to refer patrons to legal aid organizations that can help.

Learning Opportunities

• **Creating Pathways to Civil Legal Justice**:
  Series of four on-demand courses for library staff. Learn more about the courses, including a short video introduction.

• **Navigating Civil Legal Issues of Natural Disasters**:
  Series of three on-demand courses focused on the civil legal issues that community members encounter as a result of a natural disaster.

• September 22 webinar, Civil Legal Issues of Natural Disasters: Libraries Can Help, to learn more about the newest course series.

• **Learning Groups for Creating Pathways for Civil Legal Justice Courses**:
  How to lead a group of colleagues taking the courses together.
Navigating Civil Legal Issues of Natural Disasters

- Getting Started
- Introduction to Natural Disasters, Civil Legal Issues, and Library Roles
- Building the Library Disaster Response Network
- Help Patrons Be Prepared for Natural Disasters
- Course Evaluation
- Final Activity and Course Completion
These are blue-sky days

This is the best time to plan.
- Identify legal providers
- Assemble resources
- Connect with partners

Disaster is sudden and disruptive

Everybody feels the impact in some way
Questions?

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Thank you!

This project is made possible by a partnership with the Legal Services Corporation and OCLC’s ongoing support of the WebJunction program.