

Restoring *Power*:

How a Law School Responded to Superstorm Sandy



Contents

FOREWORD 1

INTRODUCTION 1

I. THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM 2

 a. Preparing to Prepare 2

 b. Actually Preparing for Disaster 5

II. WEATHERING THE STORM 6

III. A CALL FOR HELP- The TLC HEART HELPLINE 7

 a. Why Should a Law School Establish an Independent Helpline When FEMA Provides One? 7

 b. The Stages of Disaster Recovery 10

IV. HELP IS ON THE WAY- The Logistics of Coordinating Student Pro-Bono Volunteers 11

 a. Finding Placements 11

 b. Finding Students 12

 c. Schedules and Calendars 13

 d. Accommodations and Travel 13

 e. Planning for the Spring Break Trip 14

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR PLANNING SPRING SERVICE TRIPS 14

 f. Training, Education, and Managing Students and Their Expectations 16

 g. Problem Resolution 18

 h. Evaluations 18

 i. Keeping interest in the program strong in the face of competing events and other disasters 19

V. THROWING OUT A LIFELINE- Establishing a Disaster Law Clinic 19

CONCLUSION 23

RESOURCES 24

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 26

FOREWORD

When Superstorm Sandy pummeled the Northeast's tri-state region from October 28th through October 30th 2012, it was for many, the worst storm in living memory. Making landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey, Sandy created an unprecedented storm surge which flooded the New York City subway and vehicle tunnels and swept away the majority of beach and dune sands from Fire Island, Long Island's most famous vacation destination. In Nassau and Suffolk Counties, the storm damaged a total of 95,534 buildings and left 4.4 cubic tons of debris across both counties.¹ Flood damage to stores and restaurants shuttered them for weeks or months at a time. Many homes and businesses had no electricity for weeks. The storm disrupted electrical power plunging thousands into darkness. It also created a sense of powerlessness in many, as they attempted to navigate the dark labyrinth of bureaucracy seeking to regain their normal lives. Landlord/tenant issues, labor and employment issues, insurance claims and appeals, and application for FEMA benefits easily overwhelmed individuals distraught and dislocated as a result of the storm. As we learned from the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina resolving these legal issues requires long-term legal assistance. Touro Law Center's response sought to "restore the power" to those dealing with the legal devastation created by Sandy's aftereffects.

Touro Law Center has had longstanding and strong commitment to public service and had been assisting with the critical legal needs of Gulf Coast residents since Hurricane Katrina hit in 2005. Twice each year, Touro students spent one week helping the overwhelmed local legal services providers in New Orleans cope with the increased need for legal services. Now the disaster had hit home. When the storm ceased on October 31st, the administrators, faculty, staff, and student leaders who were able to reach the building found it unscathed by the storm with its electrical and telecommunications infrastructure fully functional. The school had escaped the devastation visited on the surrounding area. The Touro community rolled up its sleeves and went to work to set up a disaster response project based on years of experience assisting those affected by Hurricane Katrina. Touro established a telephone helpline where individuals could receive assistance from disaster-law trained law students and volunteer attorneys, added a disaster law class to the curriculum, and established a disaster law clinic. The school also hired a coordinator to help manage the enthusiastic offers of help received from law schools and law students across the county.

This manual seeks to help law schools wishing to set up a disaster response project to be able to do it faster, better, and more efficiently through the lessons learned during the initial days of our response to Superstorm Sandy. We hope such a manual would never be needed again, but changing global weather patterns have rendered the phrase "storm of the century" obsolete as weather phenomena of such unusual magnitude now occur regularly. These super storms are more frequent, more severe, and more extensive in scope, often striking areas not normally prone to the particular disaster. Good Luck!

¹ Newsday, January 7, 2013 <http://www.newsday.com/long-island/fema-sandy-impacted-95-534-buildings-on-li-1.4418074> (last visited 10/29/2013)

INTRODUCTION

Mass disasters disproportionately affect the most vulnerable in society. Pre-disaster policy choices create conditions that adversely impact the ability of the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and the immigrant community to prepare and cope with disasters. Post-disaster policy decisions as to the allocation of recovery funds tend to favor the middle class and the well-to-do.

Touro Law Center students provided extensive assistance to those affected by Hurricane Katrina in 2005 as did the thousands of law students from other schools that descended on the Gulf Coast to help and became the Student Hurricane Network². Touro law students made regular twice-yearly trips to the Gulf Coast through the spring of 2012. The winter 2012 Gulf trip was cancelled as the students and the resources were needed to cope with the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy on Long Island.

Law students can help augment the capacity of overwhelmed local legal services providers. They can help with client intake and quickly amass large quantities of data through surveys. The information gained can later support litigation efforts to address the complex long-term legal needs arising from the disaster. By harnessing the skills and energy of law students and committed volunteer lawyers, law schools can increase access to justice for underserved communities and provide intense experiential learning opportunities for law students. The experience may instill in the students a life-long commitment to support pro-bono efforts. The advice most often heard from those who responded to earlier disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, other weather events, and the September 11th 2001 attack on New York City were 1) the need to prepare and train well in advance of a disaster and 2) the need to be fully integrated into the larger community's relief network, social as well as legal.

In this respect Touro Law Center stood on a solid foundation as it had both a long-standing commitment to public service law and numerous relationships with legal service and social services providers on Long Island, in New York City, as well as the greater region. These deeply-rooted connections enabled the school to quickly receive grants to set up its TLC-HEART, Touro Law Center Hurricane Emergency Assistance and Referral Team project and hire a student pro-bono placement coordinator. We built on what was learned from responses to previous disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and the September 11th terrorist attack and adapted

²The STUDENT HURRICANE NETWORK (SHN) was a student-run, student-driven organization that existed from 2005 through 2009 and was formed to coordinate the almost 5500 students who descended to help Katrina-affected individuals. Initially the SHN members, themselves law students and suffering from Katrina, handled all the needs of the students but eventually migrated from managing the arrangements for each individual student to providing support to schools so that students could organize their own trips and make their own arrangements. The SHN helped free prisoners languishing in jails, stopped the bulldozing of homes without notice to homeowners, and challenged racial discriminations when white homeowners were receiving higher remuneration for their damaged homes, than African-American homeowners were receiving for similar properties.

that to the situation Sandy created. While the school had this deeply-rooted network and a band of disaster-response experienced students as a result of the school's work with those affected by Hurricane Katrina, Touro's immediate response to Superstorm Sandy was, of necessity, reactive and ad-hoc.

This manual outlines the procedures followed and lessons learned in setting up Touro's Superstorm Sandy response effort which was the TLC-HEART Hurricane Emergency Assistance and Referral Team.

Chapter 1 of this manual will discuss the pre-planning that needs to be considered before engaging in a disaster response project and suggestions for actual advanced preparation and training of students and volunteer attorneys. Chapter 2 will briefly address actions to be taken during the actual disaster. Chapter 3 will describe the establishment and operation of the TLC HEART HELPLINE and the use of legal needs surveys to supplement data obtained from the calls placed to the helpline. Chapter 4 discusses the planning, coordination, and placement of law student volunteers in pro-bono disaster related legal services projects. Chapter 5 will discuss the establishment of Touro's disaster law clinic and highlight the results achieved on behalf those affected by Sandy. An appendix provides information on additional sources of information that schools may find useful in establishing their own disaster response projects.

I. THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

a. Preparing to Prepare

Any law school wishing to replicate Touro Law Center's Superstore Sandy's response before disaster strikes should first engage in "pre-planning" while the sun is shining and the winds are still. A school may not wish to or be able to replicate every element of Touro's Sandy response since inevitably the number of worthwhile projects greatly exceeds the funding available.

The most crucial question to consider is why should a law school establish a disaster response effort to assist disaster-affected individuals with the legal needs that arise in the wake of any mass disaster? Is not such an effort better left to the pro-bono efforts by bar associations or other low-income legal services providers? Traditionally, law schools concentrated on teaching students the substantive law and training them to "think like a lawyer." Today that is no longer enough.

Legal education today faces considerable criticism as debt-burdened graduates face the most challenging job market in years due to the economy and the changing nature of the legal profession. Students are demanding more "experiential learning" while in law school to better prepare them to practice law. Law firms face tremendous pressures from clients to keep legal

costs down. Many clients do not want first-year associates to work on their matters, thereby eliminating a long-established method of training and development for new lawyers.

Establishing a disaster assistance project provides opportunities for law students to train in a new and growing field of law. The legal needs crisis produced by any disaster can provide “a useful context for the type of dynamic social justice-oriented learning advocated by the Carnegie report.”³ The wide variety of placement opportunities available help create meaningful contacts that could lead to future job opportunities. A one-week alternative break service trip provides an immersion into social justice issues that many students may never have encountered.

A law school is a highly visible member of its local community. Establishing a disaster assistance project reinforces the school’s image as a caring member of the community. Any mass disaster provides many human interest stories which gain the attention of local, regional, and national media. Positive publicity improves the school’s name recognition which can attract more funding from philanthropic foundations and increased alumni donations. Publicity can also generate more interest from prospective students, an important consideration at a time when the numbers of law school applications have declined greatly.

The next issue is funding the school’s legal disaster response effort. The first source of funding is the law school itself. How much of its own resources does the law school have available to invest into the project? A school that sees the project as an extension of its educational mission to train law students in both substantive and practical legal skills will be willing to invest more resources.

Other sources of funding are federal, state, and local government grants. Private foundations and alumni groups are other potential funding sources. Some schools may partially or entirely fund students’ volunteer trips, while other schools may require students to conduct their own fundraising to underwrite the service trips. A law school wishing to engage in a disaster response project should consider joining a consortium of other social and legal services providers as this may facilitate obtaining funding since funders are often more willing to assist a consortium than a single entity.

Once the issues of whether to even engage in a disaster response project and funding have been settled, the following are other factors to be considered.

- availability of primary and alternate contact information for key members of the school community, especially those involved in coordinating disaster response
- the extent of the administration’s support for a disaster response project
- the extent of the faculty’s support for a disaster law response project
- faculty availability to assist with supervision of law student volunteers

³ Davida Finger. Laila Hlass, Anne S. Hornsby, Susan S. Kuo & Rachel A. Van Cleave, *Engaging the Legal Academy in Disaster Response* 211,212 Seattle J. for Soc. Just. (2011)

- the school's relationship to the larger legal and social services providers in the community
- the school's relationship with the media which can be instrumental in promoting the response effort, keeping up the enthusiasm for the response effort, attracting new volunteers, and attracting additional sources of funding
- Will the school's disaster response project address only the day-to-day legal needs of individuals affected by the disaster or will the project also embrace larger policy issues?
- Whether an on-site telephone helpline would be a feasible response? If so, what will the hours of operation be, how would volunteers be recruited, and how would helpline operations be affected during exam periods and semester breaks?
- Is there an alternate site with which the law school could partner with to host a helpline?
- Touro Law Center was able to set up the helpline because it did not suffer any damage during the storm.
- Does a clear policy exist as to protections afforded to outside volunteer lawyers?

One problem encountered in setting up the TLC-HEART Project was loss of volunteer momentum as some attorneys moved on to other efforts or were no longer interested in volunteering because of the initial delay in clarifying the issue of malpractice insurance for and liability of the volunteer attorneys supervising the law student helpline volunteers.

- If the school wishes to establish a disaster law clinic, does it have the expertise in-house required to direct the clinic or does it need to initiate a search to hire faculty for the clinic?
- What will be the scope of the clinic's response be? Touro's clinic concentrates on insurance matters while a neighboring law school's clinic handles various categories of Superstorm Sandy related issues. If the clinic's scope is too narrow, it may limit access to funding sources.
- Will the clinic undertake long-term actions such as engaging in impact litigation to affect broad policy changes based on patterns of injustice discovered as a result of data collected during the immediate response effort?
- What school policies may need to be modified, i.e. attendance policies to assist students who themselves may be affected by the disaster?
- The capacity of the IT department to record classes for students who cannot get to class and what can be done when the need exceeds the capacity of the IT department.
- What resources are available to assist students who are affected by the disaster with regard to lost textbooks and other academic material?
- The efficiency and effectiveness of the final project depends on how clear, focused, and realistic administrators are as to what they wish to accomplish.
- How long will the project continue and will the institution accept the possibility that the project may have to be terminated even while a need still exists?
- Does the institution have a realistic understanding of its resources?

b. Actually Preparing for Disaster

All disasters involve preparation, response, and recovery. However, each disaster is unique depending where it takes place and the corresponding social, political, and economic factors existing in that location. For example, Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans' lower Ninth Ward, but on Long Island, poverty is not concentrated into a defined area but instead exists in "pockets" scattered across the island, nor did individuals languish in jail for months because records were lost or destroyed by the storm.

The speed and efficiency of the response depends on the degree of advance preparation of materials and personnel. The ability of the local legal services providers "to absorb a massive new caseload is only as good as the strength and integration of the state's delivery and pro-bono system before the disaster."⁴ An influx of law student volunteers can augment an overburdened pro-bono network in a disaster even if the pre-disaster condition of the legal services delivery system is not ideal. However, the organizations receiving the volunteers must expend much time and energy to prepare materials and train volunteers while struggling to maintain their own organizations affected by the disaster. Advance preparation reduces the burden on the host organizations and increases the effectiveness of the students' participation. Collaboration between law schools and other legal and social service providers assures better preparation by reducing duplication of efforts and minimizing stress on the individuals seeking assistance.

Specific steps that can be taken before any disaster strikes include:

- Review any existing disaster response manuals and update as needed
- Insure that hard copies of materials are available in case power or internet access is disrupted
- Compile a preliminary guide to local, state, and federal assistance programs
- Collaborate with legal and social services providers in the large community to ensure that all organizations are aware of available resources⁵
- Cooperate with local bar associations to enlist volunteer attorneys to supervise student volunteers in event of disaster
- Recruit and train volunteers in basic emergency benefit programs so that in case of disaster, there is a pool of trained volunteers ready to staff a helpline
- Law schools can host community education nights to educate the community at large regarding basic emergency preparation with respect to legal issues arising after a disaster i.e. Making copies of insurance policies, mortgage documents, health information, emergency contact information etc. and keeping it all together in a waterproof envelope in an easily accessible location in the home
- Develop a "buddy system" by pairing a student going on a service trip with a fellow student remaining at home. If internet access is disrupted at the disaster-affected area,

⁴ Karen A. Lash, Reilly Morse *MITIGATING DISASTER: LESSONS FROM MISSISSIPPI* 77 MSLJ 895,895 (2008)

⁵ *Id.* at 900, (in Mississippi, many resources were not being utilized because those responding to the legal crisis were not aware the resources existed.)

then the student in the field could text back questions that need to be researched to his or her “buddy” who could then research the issue and reply back via text, email, telephone or whatever social media is accessible.

- Bi-lingual students can assist in developing informational flyers for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP)
- Pro-actively identify procedures and tasks that could be simplified and streamlined so as to permit successful involvement by numerous student volunteers on one-week service trips despite the constant turnover of student groups.⁶

A masterful example of this streamlining is the assembly line style process developed by the University of Miami Law School to help its clinic students assist eligible Haitians living in the US applies for temporary protected status (TPS) under immigration laws. The clinic developed a TPS Toolkit which served as a blueprint to enable inexperienced law students to perform mass intakes and help large numbers of eligible individuals apply for TPS quickly and accurately

II. WEATHERING THE STORM

At the moment any disaster occurs, the primary goal is for all students and disaster-response volunteer attorneys is to stay safe and comply with all instructions from law enforcement personnel regarding evacuations, travel restrictions, and emergency communications.

Attorneys and law students are not “first responders” a term which is reserved for the law enforcement, fire and rescue, and medical personnel whose job it is to tend to the physical needs of the victims and to secure life and property. The legal crisis which arises in the wake of any disaster lasts for weeks, months, and even years as evidenced by the continuing efforts in the Gulf Coast today in 2013, eight years after Katrina struck. The confusion and disorientation that follows any mass disaster creates a tremendous need for information and advocacy. However, the law students, volunteer attorneys, and others providing assisting with the legal needs of disaster-affected individuals may themselves have suffered losses while keeping up with their academic obligations, and running their own practices. Care must be taken to avoid unfairly overburdening any one individual or organization to prevent burnout.

Collaborative coalitions should be established well in advance of any disaster. While the disaster is occurring there should be frequent communications between coalition members to stay

⁶ Melissa Gibson Swain, JoNel Newman, *Helping Haiti in the Wake of Disaster: Law Students as First Responders*, 6 *Intercultural Hum. Rts. L. Rev.* 133,147 (2011)

abreast of the status of their respective elements to achieve timely modifications of pre-established protocol.

III. A CALL FOR HELP- The TLC HEART HELPLINE

The greatest need in the immediate aftermath of any disaster is the need for information. Individuals are confused, distraught and overwhelmed. They need information regarding what to do and where to go to obtain assistance. A well-coordinated, well-staffed helpline can be an excellent resource for a law school to provide to the community. The post-disaster response period consists of several stages. The nature and complexity of questions received change and evolve as the disaster response progresses from one stage to the next. Legal needs surveys done at each stage of the recovery process also complement the helpline's efforts by providing additional information on emerging issue trends, unmet needs, and underserved communities.

a. Why Should a Law School Establish an Independent Helpline When FEMA Provides One?

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended 42 U.S.C. § 5121 provides federal aid to state and local governments as well as voluntary relief organizations whenever the President of the United States declares a "major disaster." The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) coordinates this federal aid through several programs. One such program is the Disaster Legal Services (DLS) program, a cooperative effort between the American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division (YLD) and FEMA. Under the DLS program the national YLD together with the affected state's YLD chapter, if requested by FEMA, provides legal assistance to low-income individuals affected by a declared major disaster. FEMA determines when to initiate the program. Once FEMA activates the DLS program, depending on the magnitude of the disaster, the DLS/YLD helpline can be operational within a week or two at the latest. Thus it can take several weeks for individuals to obtain assistance.

An individual school that is willing and able to establish its own helpline can more promptly provide the community with this resource. Since volunteers will mostly be drawn from the affected community, they may be more knowledgeable about local resources. The helpline must be publicized as many ways as possible through whatever means of communication are available. A Twitter feed or a Facebook page can quickly be set up. For example: <https://www.facebook.com/TlcHeart> is the Facebook page for Touro's TLC-HEART Hurricane Emergency Assistance and Referral Team helpline.

- If conditions permit, an onsite location is best to facilitate student and faculty involvement

- If possible, have agreements in place with other organizations, bar associations, and law firms to provide access to space and phones to operate the helpline if school facilities are affected by disaster.
 - Decide on hours of operation and recruit student volunteers through the school's student organizations
1. Provide a means for callers to leave messages after hours and match the number of student volunteers to available phone lines
 2. Recruit volunteer attorneys to supervise student volunteers if advance efforts to do so were not made.
 3. Send e-mail blast to alumni
 4. Reach out to bar associations and area law firms, keeping in mind that they too may be experiencing disruptions because of the disaster.

Touro received an enthusiastic response to its outreach but very few who responded had expertise in flood insurance law.

The TLC HEART helpline was fortunate to have a full-time volunteer attorney supervisor who:

- Monitored the trending issues as measured by the nature of questions being posed to helpline volunteers in real time
- Identified and prioritized research tasks that arose based on the trending issues
- Coordinated with research volunteers who then were quickly able to research and update the helpline volunteers with information on evolving issues.
- Analyzed the intake sheets collected by student volunteers to verify the existence of true legal issues as opposed to requests for information
- Monitored intake sheets to insure that all required information was present to eliminate need for attorneys to call back to obtain the information.
- Monitored referrals made to outside volunteer attorneys and followed up to insure that services were being provided

If it is not possible to recruit a full-time volunteer, an alternative is to recruit volunteers to be the “officer of the day” for one day. It is important to have one person monitor trends in the nature of questions and issues encountered by helpline volunteers. This enables research volunteers to more effectively obtain information to assist the helpline volunteers. Also monitoring intake sheets for completeness and presence of true legal issues eliminates the need for volunteer attorneys to make call backs to obtain missing information or to repeatedly explain to callers why an attorney cannot help with their particular issue.

Flexibility and adaptability are essential components for a helpline or any disaster response project. Technology such as computers and digital tools provides maximum efficiency but may be impossible options in the wake of disasters, thus any intake forms,

numbering systems, and any other information gathering methodologies should be simplified as far as possible to enable them to be used by volunteers relying on paper, pens, and pencils.

Touro law students, faculty, and library staff collaborated to quickly compile a sixteen-page resource guide to federal, state, local, and private assistance programs. This guide enabled helpline student volunteers to independently handle a large volume of informational calls quickly and efficiently, thus keeping volunteer attorneys free to assist callers who had true legal issues.

Door-to-door legal needs surveys are needed to:

- monitor delivery of disaster assistance
- identify un-served or underserved communities
- gather data which can identify long-term needs and challenges
- Uncover social justice issues relating to pre-disaster and post-disaster policy choices.
- Hold federal, state, and local government programs and officials accountable to their communities

A legal needs survey should be conducted for each stage of the response process. The initial survey should be modified and adjusted as needed in each stage of the disaster response. It is important to note that as essential as legal needs surveys are to monitoring the delivery of legal and other assistance to individuals affected by a mass disaster, engaging in survey work may or may not qualify as pro-bono work depending on the definition of pro-bono in the particular jurisdiction where the surveys are conducted.

As soon as the immediate threat from the disaster is over, student volunteers should conduct the first legal needs survey to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of relief efforts. Students can also assist volunteer attorneys, if the situation warrants, in monitoring shelters and prisons to insure that human rights violations do not occur. This was not an issue during Superstorm Sandy, but has been in other mass disasters such as Hurricane Katrina. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has established the “*Guiding Principles for Internally Displaced Persons*” to protect the rights of internally displaced individuals in cases of natural or manmade disasters or civil unrest.⁷

⁷ An internally displaced person (IDP) is one who is forced to leave his or her home because of war, natural or man-made calamity but remains within the territorial borders of his or her country. The principles can be found at: <http://www.unhcr.org/43ce1cff2.html>

b. The Stages of Disaster Recovery

Calls came into the Touro TLC HEART helpline in “waves” which evolved and changed as the stages of recovery progressed. The focus of Touro Law Center’s helpline was addressing questions related to emergency benefits, insurance claims, FEMA claims and appeals, landlord/tenant and labor/employment/unemployment issues. Law student volunteers staffed the helpline and handled informational calls themselves. If a caller had a legal issue, the volunteers would complete an intake sheet, and then a volunteer attorney would call the individual back. If callers had legal needs that required more than a telephone consultation would provide, they would be referred to attorneys who had volunteered to take pro-bono cases.

A file was set up for cases deemed resolved. When a caller’s matter was fully addressed, the intake sheet would be placed in the resolved cases file. Then a volunteer would later call back to speak with the individual about their experience with the helpline and if there were any further issues that had arisen since the initial call.

THE HELPLINE TIMELINE

STAGE	TIME FRAME	NATURE OF INQUIRIES TO THE HELPLINE
1	First three to four weeks post-disaster	Informational requests relating to survival needs- emergency housing Emergency food stamps or the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, (SNAP) Filing for FEMA benefits Some questions on landlord/tenant issues
2	One to two months post-disaster	More complex landlord-tenant issues such as: Premise habitability Tenant’s obligation to pay rent Landlord’s obligation to make repairs Wrongful eviction Breaking leases, abandoned property Employment issues such as: Employers forcing workers to take vacation days when business forced to close for repairs Emergency unemployment compensation Reinstatement rights if business is able to reopen
3	Three to Five Months post-disaster	FEMA Appeals Insurance Appeals Termination of Benefits Inadequate coverage
4	Five months post-disaster and beyond	Rebuilding and contractor fraud issues Insurance fraud Worker exploitation Rezoning , licensing, and long-term housing issues

In setting up the helpline, we realized that a best practice would be for the law school, the local and state bar associations to collaborate in developing CLE training to familiarize volunteer attorneys with the issues that will arise in the next stage of the disaster. Ideally, training for the first-stage informational calls should be done before any disaster occurs. Then towards the middle of stage 1, CLE training should be arranged to familiarize student and attorney volunteers

with the questions and issues they will face in stage 2, and so on. Students should participate in the training also to be better able to recognize issues and be able to refer callers to the appropriate attorney. The American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Disaster Preparedness has many resources that can be helpful.

<http://www.americanbar.org/groups/committees/disaster.html>.

IV. HELP IS ON THE WAY- The Logistics of Coordinating Student Pro-Bono Volunteers

Touro Law Center received numerous offers of assistance from law schools and law students all across the nation in the wake of Superstorm Sandy. The model for coordinating and harnessing the energy and enthusiasm of so many volunteers was the Student Hurricane Network, which arose in response to the unprecedented devastation inflicted on the legal services providers and the judicial system by Hurricane Katrina. Thousands of students poured into New Orleans, Louisiana and Biloxi, Mississippi to assist in meeting the legal needs of thousands of the most vulnerable citizens of the region. While the assistance was greatly needed, the situation also illustrated the difficulties of integrating an influx of people into a region where housing, transportation, and communications were already strained by the disaster itself. Careful planning is needed to insure that the helpers do not become hindrances.

a. Finding Placements

Finding successful placement opportunities for law student volunteers requires knowledge of the affected area's needs and resources and the ability to match students' abilities to the organizations' needs. Whether the project involves sending students away from their home school to a disaster-affected area, or attracting students from elsewhere to come to a school in a disaster-affected area, the best way to start is to contact the Director of Pro-Bono or Public Interest Law Director at law schools across the country. This individual will be familiar with the different opportunities for pro-bono in his or her particular region and can make appropriate referrals. The name of every such individual is listed at:

http://apps.americanbar.org/legalservices/probono/lawschools/staff_listings.html.

Once potential host organizations have been identified, they must be evaluated to determine their suitability for student placements. Not all organizations may be willing to accept students for one-week assignments as they may feel that the disruption to the organization's operations is greater than the assistance received from the students. This feeling must be respected as this may help influence the organization to reconsider. On large-scale projects where there is constant turnover of groups, it is most important to insure that there is an efficient way of documenting all work products from an outgoing group so that the incoming group can

continue the work. A flash drive, kept at the host organization, and signed in and out by each incoming or outgoing group of students is one way of documenting work product.

Despite the challenges, student volunteers can make significant contributions during a during one-week assignment. Possible placement sites are legal services providers, town or county attorneys, prosecutors, and law school clinics. Nevertheless, schools seeking to place students in volunteer pro-bono assignments should consider the following:

- The nature of the organization- Does it provide direct services or is it engaged in policy and administrative advocacy work?
- What are the organization's needs? Is it looking for students to conduct surveys, perform client intakes, engage in research and writing, or assist with drafting documents for litigation?
- Will the organization accept students for only one week?
- Will the organization have attorneys available to directly supervise students?
- What will the physical work environment be like?
- How many students can the organization accommodate?
- Does the organization accept individual students or does it prefer that students be accompanied by a faculty advisor?
- Will the service opportunities available to the students comply with their home state and/or home school pro-bono requirements?
- Does the organization have any political, religious, or cultural affiliations that potential student volunteers might find disconcerting?

b. Finding Students

The director of a law school's pro-bono or public interest initiative is a good starting point for recruiting student volunteers from across the country to engage in legal disaster relief work. He or she will be familiar with the particular state's rules on number of pro-bono hours required for admission to the bar and how that state defines pro-bono work. All pro-bono work is public service, but not all public service work will qualify as pro-bono. He or she can promote the project to the school's student organizations.

To recruit students from the coordinator's own school, the coordinator should reach out to the student organizations on campus. If the school has students who belong to the Student Disaster Relief Network, those students can put on presentations illustrating past trips to encourage fellow students to join the volunteer effort. Outreach should also be made to students in the law school's other clinic such as the family law, elder law, or small business clinic. For vulnerable populations, disasters happen every day, a mass disaster merely exacerbates the crises that exist in their day-to-day life.

c. Schedules and Calendars

Most pro-bono student volunteer placements consist of one-week trips to the affected area during the spring and winter recess. During the winter recess, placement sites will generally be closed on December 25 and January 1st and close early on December 24 and December 31. During spring recess trips, there may be local or regional holidays where the host sites are closed. If the hosts sites are closed on a holiday, having students perform legal research back at their hotel rooms is an option if electricity and internet access is available.

Another timing issue is the academic schedule. Towards the end of the semester as final examinations approach, students and faculty will be busy. It may be difficult to reach coordinators or faculty. Thus, it is important to get as many details finalized before the hectic end of the semester. It may not be either feasible or practical to host student volunteers during examination periods

d. Accommodations and Travel

The sooner accommodations and travel arrangements are booked, the greater the selection available and the lower the cost. While it does take time to finalize a trip and confirm how many students will be involved, it is important to make reservations as soon as feasible to help reduce expenses. Exercising creativity with regard to arrangements can also minimize costs.

Accommodations

The school's coordinator should contact the sales manager or special events representative at area hotels to negotiate discount rates at the hotel if possible. Stressing the following positive benefits to the hotel can help in obtaining significantly reduced rates, if the national hotel chain's policies permit.

- Generation of favorable publicity for the hotel as a result of supporting the efforts of student volunteers traveling away from their homes and families to assist those affected by the disaster.
- Potential steady stream of student volunteers for weeks or months generating revenue
- Good will generated on the part of area residents towards the hotel may sway them to choose that hotel when considering where to hold family events.

Other Possible Accommodation Providers

- Youth hostels
- Local churches or other houses of worship willing to accommodate volunteers
- Home hospitality through school alumni living in the area

Travel Arrangements

For both air and car rental reservations, the coordinator should check with the development and student affairs offices to see if the school has any institutional discounts with any airlines or car rental companies.

For air travel arrangements, it may be more efficient for each school's team to handle air reservations. It is vital for students to have information about the local travel infrastructure at their destination in advance. Some considerations are:

- Will their placement sites be easily accessible by public transportation and how far is the transportation from their lodgings?
- Will the host school be able to provide transportation to the students' work assignments?
- Will students be driving to the host school or will they need to rent cars when they arrive? Student groups are usually separated and assigned to different placement sites which may be far apart.

e. Planning for the Spring Break Trip

Planning for a successful spring break trip needs to begin as soon as the previous fall semester begins. The initial contact with law schools nationwide is only the beginning as months of repeated follow-up and follow-through are needed to gauge what the needs and interest of each school are and what possibilities exist for meeting those needs.

It is crucial that law schools, project coordinators, and students clearly understand how their state bar defines pro-bono legal work. The state bar and the law school in any particular state may have a different requirement from the home state as to the number of hours required for admission to the bar. Some law schools may not recognize work done by students placed with district attorney's offices as pro-bono work, while the state bar may accept it. Law students performing pro-bono services must be directly supervised by a licensed attorney.

Here is a sample timeline for planning a spring break trip:

SAMPLE TIMELINE FOR PLANNING SPRING SERVICE TRIPS⁸

September

- Contact all law schools nationwide to advise of upcoming opportunity.
- Send blast email to law school deans after consulting with schools' own dean.
- Inform potential participating schools of past summer's activities
- Inform of the need for assistance on Long Island
- Outline opportunities which may be available
- Advise what the process will be going forward.

⁸ This timeline is based on one graciously prepared by Ms. Deirdre Byrne, former Student Pro-Bono Coordinator for TLC HEART as a proposed timeline for planning student volunteers service trips to Long Island to assist individuals affected by Superstorm Sandy. It is offered here as a planning tool to guide other schools and should be modified and adapted as needed .

- Follow-ups
- Requirements
- Deadlines
- Meet with students of school's Student Disaster Relief Network Chapter, if available for input and assistance.

October

- Send out an "interest questionnaire" to both schools and potential providers
- For placement providers
- See what the level of interest is
- Inquire as to what their needs might be
- Advise what students can/cannot do
- Tell what the process is from the school's perspective.
- For schools
- See what level of interest is
- Inform what types of opportunities may be available
- Tell what the process is from the school's perspective.

November

- Continue to contact schools personally and providers personally,
- See what questions each group may have and respond; forward articles about local needs and what the school's clinic is doing as well as other groups who are providing hurricane recovery services

December through January

- Remind schools of upcoming deadlines
- Remind providers of upcoming deadlines

Providers- contact to determine:

- Needs
- Number of students each provider can accept
- A brief description of what the work will entail
- Any specific requirements the provider may have, i.e. a Confidentiality agreement, etc.

Schools

- Contact to ascertain if there are any questions and remind of deadlines
- Advise of any requirements-special requests, resumes, confidentiality agreements, etc.
- Provide travel and lodging information

For Both

- Be available and respond quickly to all questions

- Develop publicity for sponsoring school and beyond, keep sending all relevant news to schools.

February

- Begin confirmation of providers and schools
- Definite number of placements
- Number of students needed at each placement
- Which schools are participating
- Number of students and number of supervisors
- Dates of arrivals and departures
- Travel and lodging in place for each group

March

- Monitor arrival and activities of groups.
- Track and record data
- Number of placements
- Types of work
- Which schools are participating
- Number of students from each school
- Number of total students
- Numbers of hours worked
- Certifications-Provide as needed by participating schools
- Form to sign off on NY pro-bono hours
- Distribute evaluation sheets to schools (track for level of response-consider coding to know which schools have returned sheets
- Distribute evaluation sheets to providers
- Arrange for publicity through school's public affairs office
- Photo ops
- Student interviews
- School newspaper
- Local news outlets

May

- Wrap up and review
- Draft report with data from both providers and schools
- Include results of evaluations
- Place articles for publicity
- Incorporate evaluations from schools and providers in planning for the following year's spring break service trip.

f. Training, Education, and Managing Students and Their Expectations

The amount of education and training that students receive prior to arriving at their destination will determine how effective and productive their contribution is to the disaster-relief

effort. A problem student may result in that host organization being unwilling to accept future volunteers.

The first day of a service trip usually begins with a half-day orientation before the students disperse to their placements. A pre-orientation program before the students leave their home school could better prepare the students in advance and enable them to be more productive upon arrival. Any questions that arise could be submitted in advance and the answers provided prior to the students arrival via email or phone. The actual orientation on the day of arrival could thus be less stressful and more productive.

Some possible ways of presenting a pre-departure orientation to incoming student volunteers are the following:

- Use webcasts or podcasts to provide substantive training in specific subject matter that students will need to be familiar with when they arrive.
- Use webcasts or podcasts to familiarize the students with the geographical layout of the area, damage from the disaster, as well as cultural and social aspects of the region.
- If students will be assigned to specific organizations, provide information about those organizations in advance so students can get to know the organizations they will be working with.
- Have students review the American Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division website as well as the American Bar Association's Committee on Disaster Preparedness website to learn about law and disaster response work.
- Provide information on local points of interests and sightseeing opportunities to assist students in planning their time.

Unrealistic student expectations can lead to problems for the student, the host organization, and for the relationship between the host school and the student's home school. Students may have specific ways in which they wish to serve, while the placement coordinator's goal is to place students with organizations needing the most help. Wherever possible specific placement requests should be accommodated, but students must understand that desired placements may not be available and flexibility is required.

It is important to help students understand that any work that they do makes a significant impact on individuals affected by the disaster even though the connection may not be readily apparent to them. For example, a student spending hours in an office sorting and analyzing survey results may not really understand how this is helping individuals affected by disaster. Yet the data culled by his or her efforts may form the basis for litigation efforts which then result in ameliorating injustices committed to hundreds of disaster-affected individuals.

Students must understand that first and foremost the purpose of the trip is to help local legal services providers to meet the numerous legal needs of their clients. The experience is a good resume builder but that is not the main purpose of the trip. Neither is sightseeing. Disaster relief work is emotionally draining and there should be some time built in to the schedule to

allow for the students to decompress, but students must comport themselves as professionals through the entire experience.

g. Problem Resolution

Unfortunately problems can and do arise with students and placements. It is best to have a policy in advance as to how to handle conflicts. Some possible problems could be:

- The student volunteer and the host organization may have very different political views which may make the student uncomfortable to the extent he or she cannot be effective
- A student may have misrepresented themselves on their application.
- A student may not respect the host organization's rules
- One student in a group may not do their fair share of the work

Problems need to be handled carefully to avoid any negative publicity and preserve existing relationships. Should a host organization directly discipline a student volunteer or should the situation be reported to the placement coordinator? Clear guidelines should be put in place ahead of time to prevent misunderstandings and miscommunication.

If the students are accompanied by a faculty advisor, this of course simplifies dealing with student issues. If one student in a group is not cooperating, peer pressure can be an effective tool for addressing the issue. If the group receives funding from their school, a student who does not honor his or her obligation could be required to refund any assistance received or forfeit pro-bono credit for the trip.

h. Evaluations

Both the student volunteers and the host organizations should complete evaluation forms at the end of the placement regarding their experiences. **Student** evaluations should comment on:

- Appropriateness of placement
- Quality of supervision
- Quality of training provided
- Coordinator's assistance through the recruitment process
- Effect of the placement on their legal education and personal outlook
- Effect of the placement on their commitment to pro-bono work through their legal career
- Any problems encountered during the placement, and what resolution, if any occurred
- Suggestion for improving the experience for future volunteers

Host organizations' evaluations should address the following:

- Volunteer's performance during the placement
- Appropriateness of the placement for the student volunteer
- Effect of the volunteer's presence on the host organization.

- Any problems or discipline issues with the student volunteer
- Would the organization be inclined to accept another volunteer from that particular law school, why or why not?
- Suggestions for improving the placement process

All evaluations must be given serious consideration. For example, if previous evaluations have been positive and complimentary, and one group of students or host organizations submits an evaluation that differs markedly from the previous, this input should not be summarily set aside or dismissed. Consideration should be given to how the experiences differed from the others. Was the program scheduled at the end of the semester, was the supervision different, were the students less prepared than their predecessors? Critical evaluations should be seen as a sign that something was “off” for the particular group or organization submitting the less than positive evaluation.

i. Keeping interest in the program strong in the face of competing events and other disasters

The greatest challenge in maintaining a pro-bono volunteer placement program other than funding, is sustaining interest in the program in the face of “rescue fatigue” New disasters do not wait for the issues of the previous event to be fully settled, all damage repaired, and everyone’s life to return to normal. Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, eight years later, more remains to be done. A few weeks after Superstorm Sandy devastated Long Island and New York City, the area was hit by a Nor’easter, a winter snow storm that created new problems for those suffering from Sandy. Media attention focuses intensely on a disaster in the immediate aftermath and for some time thereafter, but then attention and interest shift to other events.

Publicity is a vital tool for maintaining interest and keeping the public’s attention on the on-going challenges faced by individuals affected by the disaster. Local media outlets such as hometown newspapers and local cable channels can be most helpful in covering continuing human interest stories about individuals’ long-term struggles to recover. A school’s public relations director can serve as an effective means of creating interest and maintaining attention focused on the volunteer placement program through targeted press releases. The student volunteers themselves can be effective in creating publicity and support for their program by making presentations about their experiences to their fellow students when they return to their home schools.

V. THROWING OUT A LIFELINE- Establishing a Disaster Law Clinic⁹

Disaster law clinics are normally established after a disaster strikes. Touro Law Center established its disaster law clinic in response to Superstorm Sandy. Loyola Law School set up a Katrina clinic to assist individuals with the myriad legal issues that arose in the wake of

⁹ Data and statistics regarding the achievements of the Touro Law Center’s Disaster Law Clinic were provided by Prof. Benjamin Rajotte, Director of the Clinic.

Hurricane Katrina. However, a proactive, rather than reactive approach would be a more significant way of carrying out a law school's educational mission, thus schools should concentrate on a disaster preparedness clinic, rather than a disaster response effort.

“Institutionalizing disaster response clinics in law schools, rather than developing ad hoc clinics post-disaster would allow for more efficient and effective use of resources. Enabling attorneys to and law students to receive training for appropriate disaster response and formulate the best plan for intervention prior to the disaster.”¹⁰

In the wake of a disaster, landlord/tenant issues, insurance claims and appeals, foreclosures, and access to public benefits are the focus of attention. However, the poor, the elderly, the disabled, the immigrant community and individuals with limited English experience these issues as personal disasters in their daily lives. A mass disaster, whether natural or manmade, merely exacerbates the already-existing emergencies in the lives of vulnerable populations.

In a disaster preparedness clinic, a law student could gain substantive knowledge and practical skills in the legal fields previously mentioned by assisting individuals who are living their own personal disaster. When a mass disaster strikes, these students would be trained and ready, thus being able to quickly and efficiently join disaster legal relief efforts. Many of the students enrolled in Touro's law clinic reported that their involvement made the law human for them. One student stated that prior to enrolling in the clinic, he had doubts as to whether investing in law school would be worth it. His clinic experience erased all his doubts.

Students from Touro's disaster law clinic were able to do the following:

- Assist 85 households through consultations and follow-through on issues such as drafting legal documents and letters to insurance companies
- Help a disabled woman in poor health who was living in her truck for three weeks as a result of Superstorm Sandy. The truck, substantially damaged and contaminated by mold, would be the only shelter for the woman, during the impending February 2012 blizzard. FEMA had denied her application to repair the truck because she could not prove ownership. A friend had given her the truck more than ten years before, after the truck was abandoned on the friend's property. FEMA protocol required a home inspection prior to any decision on assistance. A student clinician spent most of the day on the phone with FEMA, and obtained a verbal commitment over the phone, from FEMA to pay for two months of housing with a possibility of renewal. The clinician then arranged for the woman to stay with relatives for the few days it would take to process the FEMA claim. A referral was made to the FECS case manager who would work to address the woman's medical and other issues, while the disaster law clinic staff would continue to assist with the FEMA claim.

¹⁰ Ota, Chiaki, *Legal Humanitarian Assistance: Instituting Disaster Response Clinics and Law Firm Engagement*, 19 Geo. J. on Poverty L. and Pol'y 515,529

- The clinic received a referral from the Salvation Army regarding an individual affected by Superstorm Sandy who was facing eviction. A few months earlier, the woman had appeared pro-se in court and consented to the eviction plus payment of \$5,500 dollars in back rent. The inaccurate judgment failed to credit her security deposit or the amount the tenant paid for mold remediation services. The landlord had assured the tenant that he would “work with her” to find other housing. Relying on the false assurances and some other duress, the woman signed the stipulation. Ordinarily an entered stipulation can be extremely difficult to vacate. However, the students researched the issue and found that the landlord had transferred the property to a trust shortly before improperly bringing the eviction action in his own name. The action was successfully vacated and the woman was referred to the FECS case manager for housing assistance.

Mass disaster also leave behind complex long-term issues that cannot be easily or quickly resolved by telephone help lines or limited pro-bono counseling. Environmental damage issues such as oil contamination and remediation efforts, usually require years of litigation. In the wake of Superstorm Sandy, over 2,600 oil spills were reported mostly resulting from basement oil tanks that either ruptured or overturned with no remediation.

Complex insurance issues are another long-term challenge that arises after a mass disaster. Homeowners face the following difficulties in dealing with insurance claims:

- Confusing or obtuse language
- Unable to understand extent of coverage or exclusionary language
- Unaware of policy deadlines for filing claims
- Unaware of how to comply with deadlines
- Unaware of their rights under the policy

Even when homeowners have their flood and homeowners insurance with same insurance company, each claim has its own claims representative and insurance adjusters, thus increasing the confusion and frustration for policyholders trying to resolve claim.

Insurance disputes and FEMA appeals are generally complex, lengthy and fact-specific requiring consultations of anywhere from one to two and half hours. The majority of cases being handled by Touro’s disaster clinic involve insurance disputes. Hiring a private attorney to handle an insurance appeal may be prohibitively expensive for an individual who has lost everything to a disaster. The need for assistance greatly exceeds any clinic’s capacity to take on lengthy, complex insurance cases. Despite the limitations, a disaster preparedness clinic can take on a select number of complex insurance cases.

This is what the Touro Law Disaster Law Clinic did to leverage resources and assist more individuals:

- Collaborated with the private bar to help more individuals.

- Engaged in programmatic initiatives to assist the general public with preparing and filing claims.
 - Created insurance checklists for the public so as to better equip them to complete claim forms
 - Established relationships with experienced building experts to provide an objective assessment of the value of insurance claims, at a greatly discounted rate or even possibly on a pro-bono basis.
 - Presented seminars for the public to educate them on the insurance process
 - Presented seminars for attorneys and legal services providers to help them develop strategies for effective advocacy and maximizing insurance settlements.
- Specific insurance issues encountered by the disaster law clinic included:

- Widespread and systemic instances of substantial undervaluing of losses by adjusters who undervalue the claim by 40 to 50% and sometimes more resulting in disputed claims totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars that delay the rebuilding effort.
- Field training and mastery of adjustment software among adjusters varied greatly among individual adjusters leading to erroneous calculations because of incorrect unit values or prices.
- Inability of homeowners to reach claim representatives or adjusters
- Homeowners receiving false assurances of cooperation from adjusters
- Homeowners hiring private adjusters who then failed to diligently pursue claims.

Clinic students also did the following:

- Helped one client draft a letter documenting the non-performance of a public adjuster over a four-month period and stipulating a deadline for him to cure. When the adjuster did not comply, then students helped to draft a letter terminating the client's contract with the public adjuster and advising her of other steps to take.
- Investigated a client's complaint that the public adjuster failed to dutifully pursue the client's claim and found that the adjuster had 120 outstanding Sandy-related claims, had not pursued the client's matter, and had subcontracted most of the work to other firms.

While the above illustrates the value provided by disaster law clinics, there are also challenges involved in establishing and maintaining a disaster law clinic.

First and foremost is funding. A law school may invest initial funding to establish the clinic but then will need to seek outside funding sources to enable the clinic to be on-going for the long-term. With the ever increasing demand on traditional sources of outside funding such as government and private foundation grants, schools should evaluate collaborating with law firms to develop innovative methods of funding a disaster law clinic.¹¹ A law firm could assist by:

- making direct financial contributions to the clinic
- temporarily placing one of their attorneys in the clinic to supervise and train students

¹¹ 19 Geo. J. on Poverty L. & Pol'y Legal Humanitarian Assistance: Instituting Disaster Clinics and Law Firm Engagement, Chiaki Ota, 2012

- providing support personnel such as paralegals to come in an present training sessions for students on how to prepare necessary litigation or court filing forms

The amount of initial funding available in large part determines the caseload a disaster clinic will be able to take on especially if dealing with complex issues such as insurance litigation and appeals. Since these cases can be lengthy, a disaster clinic which is funded for only one year may not be able to do as much as one who is funded for two years. A process must be established ahead of time to handle pending cases should the funding run out before the matters are resolved.

CONCLUSION

For three days, Touro Law Center endured the fury of Superstorm Sandy as the storm battered Long Island to pieces. When it was over, the building stood unharmed and fully functional, unlike the buildings housing other legal services providers in the area. The Touro community came together to help the larger community cope with the numerous legal that arose in the wake of Superstorm Sandy and restore a sense of power to those devastated by the storm.

Despite years of sending students to help those affected by Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast in 2005, the Touro community still had to scramble to establish the TLC HEART helpline, and recruit student and attorney volunteers. The experience of setting up the helpline illustrated the importance of pro-actively identifying the needs of those staffing the helpline, both students and volunteer attorneys and of making resources (training) available to them as soon as possible. The faculty quickly approved adding a disaster law course, and a disaster law clinic was quickly established after the devastation occurred. However, much more could have been done had these elements been part of the law school's curriculum long before Sandy came along.

Touro Law Center's integration into the larger community of social and legal services providers made it possible for the school to quickly receive foundation grants to establish the clinic. Certainly for Touro Law Center and other law schools situated in disaster-prone areas, it makes sense to make disaster preparedness clinics a permanent part of their educational mission to provide experiential training to future lawyers in what will undoubtedly be a growing field in the coming years. Given the global climate changes, and also the call for reducing the regulatory burdens on business, super storms like Sandy and even man-made disasters may well become regular occurrences instead of rare events.

RESOURCES

LINKS

American Bar Association Links

Webpage of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Pro Bono & Public Service and the Center for Pro Bono--Disaster Legal Assistance. This resource serves as an umbrella containing multiple references to other disaster- preparedness resources.

http://apps.americanbar.org/legalservices/probono/disaster_relief_legal_assistance.html

Webpage of the American Bar Association's Young Lawyer Division which in conjunction with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provide immediate temporary legal assistance to disaster survivors at no charge.

http://www.americanbar.org/groups/young_lawyers/disaster_legal_services.html

The American Bar Association's listing of Directors of Public Service and Pro Bono efforts at each law school in the country.

http://apps.americanbar.org/legalservices/probonolawschools/staff_listings.html

Law Schools and Organizations

- **Columbus School of Law/Catholic University- Disaster Preparedness Resources- Service and Learning in a time of Disaster-**

Columbus School of Law's page provides forum for law schools to discuss how law students and law school clinics have contributed to disaster response and how they continue to do so. It is an excellent resource which provides link to a podcast featuring different faculty speaking about their law school responded to disasters such as September 11, 2001 in New York, Hurricane Katrina in Louisiana, and the mortgage crisis in Michigan.

<http://www.law.edu/faculty/ogilvy/disaster/?fullsite=1>

- **Hofstra University Maurice A. Deane College of Law, Disaster Recovery Clinic**

<http://law.hofstra.edu/clinics/disasterrecoveryclinic/>

The school's disaster recovery clinic provides a wide range of services to survivors of Hurricane Sandy on Long Island, New York. The clinic performs both transactional and litigation work on behalf of its clients.

- **Touro Law Center Disaster Relief Clinic's Blog** provides updated information on disaster related issues such as insurance issues, proof of loss filing deadlines, FEMA claims and appeals, checklist for filing claims, and forms for doing so. The blog can be found here: www.disasterlaw.wordpress.com .

Two very useful links on the blog are the form to request a copy of claimants file from insurer at: <http://disasterlaw.wordpress.com/2013/12/19/form-letter-to-request-insurance-claims-file/> and also the insurance check list for proof of loss and cover letter at: <http://disasterlaw.wordpress.com/2013/12/19/insurance-checklist-from-september/>

National Disaster Legal Aid

<http://www.disasterlegalaid.org/>

This organizations' website serves as a centralized national resource to assist legal aid, pro bono attorneys, and criminal defense attorneys all over the county with legal issues arising from all types of disasters. It also strives to recruit pro-bono attorneys when disaster strikes and provide accurate information to low and moderate income individuals on disaster-related legal issues. The organizations participating in this effort are the American Bar Association, the Legal Services Corporation, National Legal Aid & Defender Association, ProBono.net and the Lone Star Legal Aid.

This website provides timely updates on disaster relief programs' rules and regulations, how to file for FEMA benefits and how to file FEMA appeals. The site also provides a section addressed specifically to attorneys and one addressed to the general public as well as links to numerous state programs in affected localities.

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- Chiaki Ota, *Legal Humanitarian Assistance: Instituting Disaster Response Clinics and Law Firm Engagement*, 19 Geo. J. on Poverty L. & Pol'y 515, (2012)
- Karen A. Lash, Reilly Morse, *Mitigating Disaster: Lessons Learned From Mississippi*, 77 Miss. L. J. 895, (2008)
- *Public Service in a Time of Crisis*, A Report and Retrospective on the Legal Community's Response to the Events of September 11, 2001 (2004) (a compendium containing contributions from numerous attorneys and law firms regarding the New York legal community's efforts to assist the survivors of September 11, 2001 and their families.)

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Touro College Jacob D. Fuchsberg Law Center's 185,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art law school is located adjacent to both a state and a federal courthouse in Central Islip, New York. Touro Law's proximity to the courthouses, coupled with programming developed to integrate the courtroom into the classroom, provide a one-of-a kind learning model for law students, combining a rigorous curriculum taught by expert faculty with a practical courtroom experience. Touro Law, which has a student body of approximately 650 and an alumni base of more than 6,000, offers full- and part-time J.D. programs, several dual degree programs and graduate law programs for US and foreign law graduates. Touro Law Center is part of the Touro College system.

Touro Law's newly implemented Portals to Practice is a cutting-edge, experiential learning program that reconceives and restructures the law school experience. Portals to Practice expands the scope and quality of legal education by focusing on the development of legal professionals, from pre-law through post-graduation.

About the Touro College and University System

Touro is a system of non-profit institutions of higher and professional education. Touro College was chartered in 1970 primarily to enrich the Jewish heritage, and to serve the larger American and global community. Approximately 19,000 students are currently enrolled in its various schools and divisions. Touro College has branch campuses, locations and instructional sites in the New York area, as well as branch campuses and programs in Berlin, Jerusalem, Moscow, Paris and Florida. New York Medical College, Touro University California and its Nevada branch campus, as well as Touro University Worldwide and its Touro College Los Angeles division are separately accredited institutions within the Touro College and University System. For further information on Touro College, please go to: <http://www.touro.edu/media/>.

