

Lessons Learned from Major Disasters



SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA
LEGAL SERVICES

Hurricane Katrina August 29, 2005

80% of City Flooded Stranding Thousands



DR-4277 August 12, 2016 - 1/3 of State Impacted in 21 Parishes



DR 4277 August 12, 2016 Historic Flood in the Baton Rouge, Louisiana Area

Central, La. Evacuation



Caskets Float Away



Tale of Two Disasters

Hurricane Katrina

- ▶ August 29, 2005: Hurricane Katrina destroys or damages nearly 80% of metro New Orleans homes and structures
- ▶ 400,000+ residents are displaced ([*The Washington Post*](#)).
- ▶ FEMA fields 1.5 million Gulf region requests for aid. - 3 States
- ▶ Costliest disaster in U.S. history - \$67.8 billion in insured losses on homes, businesses and cars

DR-4277 August Flooding

- ▶ August 12-14, 2016 - 6.9 Trillion Gallons of Rain Fell in the Greater Baton Rouge, Northshore, and Lafayette areas.
- ▶ 1/3 of Louisiana Parishes in the Disaster Declaration - 21 parishes
- ▶ “Cajun Navy” and Armed Forces evacuated over 10,000 people
- ▶ 154,000 Households Registered with FEMA
- ▶ Costliest Disaster Since Super Storm Sandy

Impact on SLLS



**Muck & Gut in Makeshift Hazard Mitigation Gear
of SLLS Chalmette Office**

Impact on SLLS

Katrina Impact

- ▶ Hurricane Katrina was the largest civil legal aid crisis in SLLS' history.
- ▶ 60% of SLLS staff lose their homes. 100% displaced 6 weeks or more.
- ▶ 33% of staff attorneys leave SLLS within four months of the storm.
- ▶ The largest SLLS office in New Orleans is out of commission for 10 weeks.
- ▶ The SLLS Chalmette office is destroyed by the flood and the Murphy Oil Spill.

DR 4277 Impact

- ▶ Most significant civil legal aid crisis since Katrina in 2005
- ▶ 33% of Baton Rouge SLLS staff lose or have significant damage to their homes and are displaced
- ▶ Two SLLS offices closed a few days in Baton Rouge & Hammond. No damage to either office.
- ▶ 13 of the 21 Parishes in Disaster Declaration are in SLLS Service Area

Service Delivery Post-Disaster

Katrina

- ▶ SLLS opens disaster hotline & temporary disaster office within a week of the storm staffed by six SLLS workers stationed at North Louisiana Legal Services in Shreveport.
- ▶ Three SLLS offices re-open within weeks
- ▶ SLLS employees + volunteer attorneys staff dozens of FEMA Disaster Recovery Centers and Red Cross Shelters.
- ▶ SLLS provided direct assistance to more than 82,000 families composed of 400,000 people) in the 10 years since Katrina and impacted thousands more through advocacy.

DR-4277

- ▶ All offices opened within a few days. Set up disasterlegal@slls.org and disaster line.
- ▶ Coordination with electronic referrals with statewide hotline
- ▶ Staff & Volunteers staffed DRC's and shelters more than 100 times in 10 parishes
- ▶ 30+ Community Outreach Events in Libraries, Senior Centers, Churches
- ▶ SLLS has opened about 700 disaster cases since 8/15/2016

Top Ten Things Lessons Learned

- ▶ 1) Essential to Prepare in Advance for Disaster - Staff, Program, & Civil Legal Services Delivery System
- ▶ 2) Stabilizing Staff is Job One after Disaster
- ▶ 3) Disaster-Related Civil Legal Needs Continue for Years Post Event
- ▶ 4) Vulnerable Populations Seek Civil Legal Aid at Higher Rates
- ▶ 5) Make Time for Impact Advocacy

Top Ten Things Lessons Learned

- ▶ 6) More Resources Devoted to Volunteer Management
- ▶ 7) Ask for Resources to Help Flood Survivors Even from Prior “Foes”
- ▶ 8) Media Useful for Advocacy, Getting the Word Out About Services, & Raising Awareness
- ▶ 9) Utilize Technology To Support Staff, Clients, Volunteers, & Partners
- ▶ 10) Analyze & Adjust Program Case Acceptance Priorities to Help Address Client Needs

1) Essential to Prepare in Advance for Disaster - Staff, Program, & Justice System

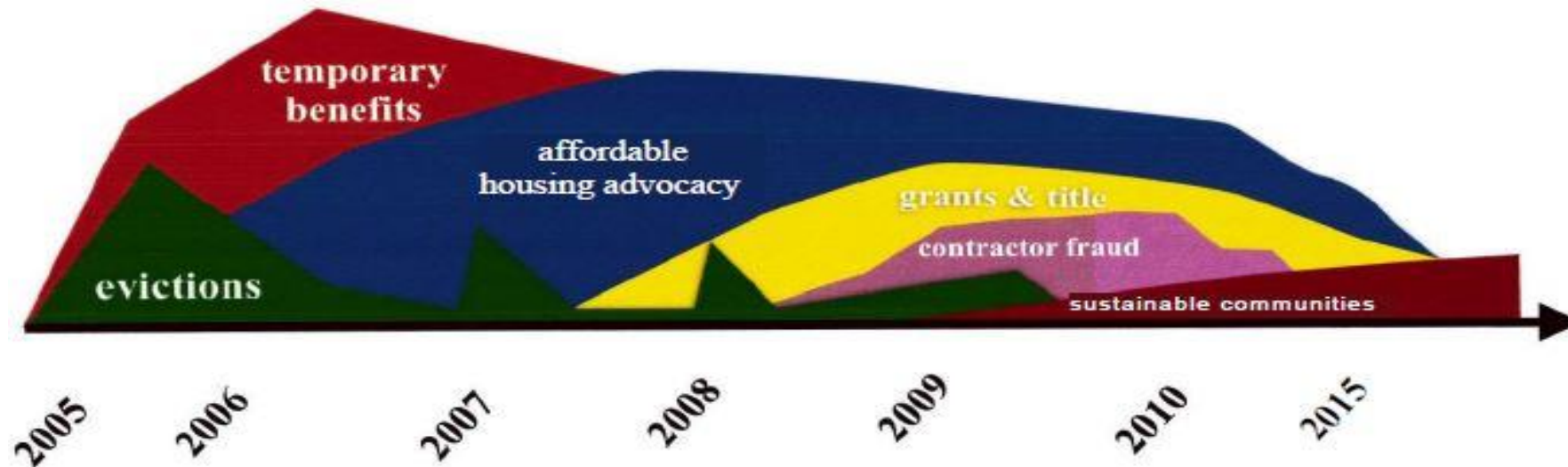
- ▶ SLLS Disaster Plan Reviewing Annually
- ▶ Prepare Staff in Advance
- ▶ Justice System Has A Plan - Daily, Weekly, Monthly Calls
- ▶ LSBA hosts Disaster Page
- ▶ Updating Resources on Lawhelp & National Disaster Legal sites

2) Stabilizing Staff is Job 1 Post-Disaster

- ▶ Regular Staff Communication
- ▶ Connecting staff to resources to support their own personal recovery
- ▶ Flexibility --Work Locations, Hours, and Remote
- ▶ Staff may need Crisis Counseling
- ▶ Non-impacted staff support impacted offices & staff
- ▶ Considering donated leave for disasters

3) Disaster-Related Civil Legal Needs Continue for Years -Short & Long-Term

HOW THE WORK EMERGED



4) Vulnerable Populations Seek Civil Legal Aid at Higher Rates Post-Disaster*

Elderly

- 15% vs.
- 28% in Disaster Cases

Disabled

- 19% vs.
- 28% in Disaster Cases

Veteran

- 1% vs.
- 7.5% in Disaster Cases

*Review of 2016 SLLS Non-Disaster vs. Disaster Impacted Households



SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA
LEGAL SERVICES

4(a) Stronger Partnerships at All Times Key to Effective Disaster Legal Services

- ▶ Faith-Based Community
- ▶ VOAD & Other Non-Profits
- ▶ Local and State Government
- ▶ Elected Officials
- ▶ Pro Bono Partners
- ▶ Other Legal Service Providers



4(b) Community Based Legal Clinics Essential Especially After DRC's Close



5) Make Time for Impact Advocacy

- ▶ **Katrina Systemic Affordable and Disaster Housing Advocacy**
- ▶ SLLS found and corrected a problem on a national scale -- the Disaster Housing Assistance Program (DHAP) included food stamps as income when setting rent. SLLS advocacy with HUD and HANO fixed issue for 31,000 people. Estimated benefit to SLLS clients: \$10 million.
- ▶ A single HUD-assisted landlord displaced nearly 300 families to charge higher rent. SLLS intervened. HUD gave Tenant Protection Vouchers and relocation assistance to the initial group plus an additional 1,500 additional families from a dozen HUD developments. Value of this aid: \$5 million yearly.
- ▶ 4 years after Katrina, 17,000 families in Louisiana were still on DHAP (Disaster Housing Assistance Program) aid. SLLS advocated successfully for a six-month extension for families affected by Katrina and Gustav/Ike. The result: \$40 million in rental assistance.

5) Make Time for Impact Advocacy

- ▶ **Continued Fight for Low-Income Homeowners: 2008-2015.**
- ▶ More than 26,000 properties in the New Orleans area had title problems when Katrina struck. SLLS anticipated demand for title clearing services, and partnered with North Carolina-based Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, LLP to clear titles for heir properties. The firm donated more than 3,000 hours.
- ▶ SLLS led group of 5 legal aid providers to help clear titles and advocated with the Road Home to provide \$1 million worth of free legal aid to homeowners. GNOF funded a collaborative project from 2011-2013 to continue.
- ▶ By 2013 SLLS cleared title on almost 1100 properties, averaging \$66,000 per property, for a total economic benefit of \$72,000,000 million for clients
- ▶ DR-4277 - Successfully advocated for extension on FEMA deadlines, Shelter at Home deadlines, additional time to prove ownership when succession needed for FEMA benefit eligibility. Need Proof of Loss for NHIP extension now.

6) More Resources Devoted to Volunteer Management

- ▶ Power of Pro Bono can expand the impact of your work and help increase access to justice
- ▶ SLLS had to devote resources to a Volunteer Coordinator post-Katrina to manage “armies” of law students and offers of volunteer lawyers
- ▶ Alternate break student volunteers now permanent fixture
- ▶ Integrating volunteer lawyers and law clinics into disaster service delivery beyond initial infusion

Flood Proof: Legal Help for Homeowners with Title Problems



- ▶ The Baton Rouge Area Foundation, with support from a W.K. Kellogg Foundation grant, has funded a Title Clearing Collaborative to address the heightened need for legal help to resolve title problems post-disaster.
 - ▶ Goal- To open 500 cases and clear title on 250 flood damaged homes impacted by the 2016 floods in 3 parishes so people can access recovery funds or other rebuilding resources.
 - ▶ Project funded for one year. Need will continue for many years.
 - ▶ **“Flood Proof” provides:**
 - ▶ Free Civil Legal services for successions & title clearing problems
 - ▶ Payment of Court or Other Related Filing Fees
 - ▶ Curators to Represent Missing Heirs through volunteer lawyers
 - ▶ Screening, Identification, & referral of other unmet legal needs posing a barrier to recovery
- To apply, call **1-844-244-7871**

7) Ask for Resources to Help Your Clients Even From New Partners

- ▶ DR-4277 - SLLS added 10 staff to address increased and anticipated demand & also help fund pro bono partners in collaborative projects
- ▶ \$925,000 in 90 days - one year projects, working on sustainability
- ▶ Post-Katrina - HUD & Housing Authority of New Orleans (HANO) partnership key to reaching client community in need of services

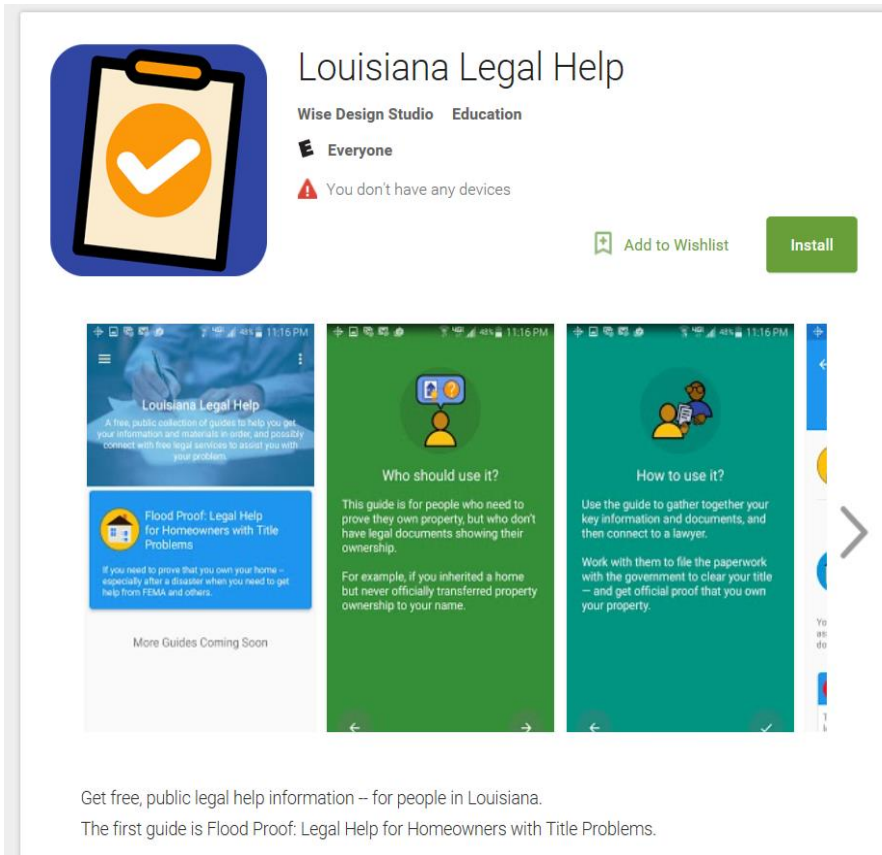
8) Media Useful for Advocacy, Client Engagement with Services, & Raise Awareness

- ▶ Develop and Nurture Media Contacts
- ▶ Local reporters stay interested
- ▶ National media interested initially & then at major anniversaries

9) Utilize Technology To Support Staff, Clients, Volunteers, & Partners

- ❖ Staff Communications - Then & Now
- ❖ Client Interaction -Then & Now
- ❖ Pro Bono Attys & Law Students
 - ✓ *ProBono Net & LawHelp Website*
 - ✓ *Online & Live Streaming Training for Volunteers*
 - ✓ *Event Brite & Sign Up Genius for Coordination*
- ❖ Partners - Disasterlegal@slls.org -Disaster Case Managers & Other Key Partners

9(a) Flood Proof: Legal Help App



The ABA Center for Innovation and Stanford University School of Law
Developed a New App to Help with Triage & Documentation Collection

<https://itunes.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewSoftware?id=1190423382&mt=8>

<https://www.play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.wisable.louhelp>

10) Analyze & Adjust Program Case Acceptance Priorities Post-Disaster

- ▶ SLLS handled 26% of all title clearing work done by all civil legal aid programs from 2007-2009.
- ▶ Realized ongoing importance of this work in our service area hit by 7 significant disasters in past 12 years alone
- ▶ Contractor Fraud Disputes higher priority post-disaster
- ▶ Natural Disaster Sales Tax Refunds
- ▶ SLLS adjusts case acceptance guidelines - permanent & temporary in response to disaster