

AppalReD Legal Aid Receives \$1.4M for Natural Disaster Recovery Legal Services

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*EVAN SMITH,
INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR*

**PRESS
RELEASE**



AppalReD
Legal Aid

Prestonsburg, KY

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The Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is awarding \$1,345,226 to AppalReD Legal Aid to support the delivery of legal services to low-income Kentuckians impacted by the severe storms, flooding, and mudslides eastern Kentucky faced in Summer 2022. LSC is also awarding AppalReD an additional \$144,502 to compensate for already incurred costs from providing services related to these natural disasters. The grant spans three years.

AppalReD is one of 14 organizations around the country receiving grants for this purpose. LSC, the largest funder of civil legal aid in the United States, received \$20 million of supplemental funding in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023 passed by Congress to support this widespread natural disaster response. After extreme weather events, victims often require immediate legal assistance to file for FEMA and insurance benefits, deal with landlord/tenant issues, access unemployment, or apply for replacements of important documents needed for education and medical benefits.

Legal issues caused by disasters can persist for years. Cases involving FEMA appeals, bankruptcy, public housing and domestic violence can emerge, and disaster victims are vulnerable to predatory scams and fraud.

“Disaster response involves so much more than physical repairs, as millions of Americans find out each year when their home or family is impacted by one of these devastating events,” said LSC President Ron Flagg. “Legal aid providers are integral in helping low-income families access vital services and resources that set them on the path to recovery.”

AppalReD will use this grant to add two attorneys and two paralegals to its disaster response team. The organization will continue to conduct outreach to those impacted by flooding, and will contract Appalachian Citizens’ Law Center to enhance services in the most severely affected regions.

Whitney Bailey, who has served as AppalReD's Disaster Resource Attorney over the past year says, “I am grateful for the LSC Disaster Grant so AppalReD can continue supporting July 2022 disaster survivors. It can be overwhelming and frustrating for disaster survivors to navigate the FEMA appeal process, title and homeownership issues, and other civil legal matters. It is a privilege to serve my eastern Kentucky community and I look forward to advocating for disaster recovery and preparedness long-term.”

Evan Smith, Interim Executive Director, says, “Over the past year all of us have become very aware of the long-term nature of our region’s recovery. Many of our neighbors are struggling to find affordable housing or continue to work on FEMA appeals. They are living proof of the maxim 'recovery takes years not weeks.' This grant will allow AppalReD Legal Aid to play an even bigger part in the ongoing response, especially as disaster survivors’ needs continue to evolve over the next three years.”

In response to the flood, AppalReD Legal Aid and its partners launched a Flood Survivors Legal Hotline last year to address the legal needs of flood survivors and contribute to the long-term improvement of the Appalachia region. Grant funds will also be used to support this resource and to update the AppalReD and KyJustice.org websites, which will include an informational website for flood survivors with a simplified intake form.

To contact the Flood Survivors Legal Hotline call 1-844-478-0099.

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Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans. The Corporation currently provides funding to 131 independent nonprofit legal aid programs in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories.

The Appalachian Research and Defense Fund of Kentucky, Inc., known as “AppalReD Legal Aid,” is a private non-profit law firm. AppalReD Legal Aid offers free civil legal help to eligible low- income people in 37 counties of the Appalachian Mountains and rolling hills of eastern and south-central Kentucky, a region home to more than 200,000 people living in poverty. AppalReD Legal Aid focuses on legal problems that affect our clients’ basic needs for food, shelter, income, and personal safety from all forms of violence.

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