



# ABOUT THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

Created by the California State Legislature in 1927, the State Bar is an administrative arm of the California Supreme Court. Its mission is to serve the people of California through careful oversight of the legal profession. The State Bar's primary functions are:

- › Licensing the 250,000 attorneys in California
- › Regulating the profession and practice of law
- › Enforcing the Rules of Professional Conduct and State Bar Act for attorneys
- › Disciplining attorneys who violate rules and laws
- › Administering the California Bar Exam
- › Advancing access to justice
- › Promoting diversity and inclusion in the legal system

The State Bar cannot represent clients or refer them to a particular attorney. If you need an attorney, the State Bar can connect you with legal aid providers or a lawyer referral service in your community that you can trust.

Follow the State Bar:



[www.calbar.ca.gov](http://www.calbar.ca.gov)  
866-44-CA-LAW

## FOR LEGAL ASSISTANCE AFTER A DISASTER

**The State Bar of California** • [www.calbar.ca.gov](http://www.calbar.ca.gov)  
866-44-CA-LAW

**Lawyer Referral Services**

[www.calbar.ca.gov/lrs](http://www.calbar.ca.gov/lrs)  
866-44-CA-LAW (866-442-2529), Outside California: 415-538-2250  
Email: [LRS@calbar.ca.gov](mailto:LRS@calbar.ca.gov)

**Complaints: Attorney Misconduct or Unauthorized Practice of Law**

[www.calbar.ca.gov/Complaints-Claims](http://www.calbar.ca.gov/Complaints-Claims)  
800-843-9053, Outside California: 213-765-1200

**California Disaster Legal Services**

[www.disasterlegalservicesca.org](http://www.disasterlegalservicesca.org)  
Provides free legal help for survivors of California disasters, and resources for volunteers, provided by trusted California nonprofit legal aid providers.

**LawHelpCA** • [www.lawhelpca.org](http://www.lawhelpca.org)

Nonprofit that provides a directory of organizations offering free or low-cost legal advice and representation in California.

**National Disaster Legal Aid Resource Center**

[www.disasterlegalaid.org](http://www.disasterlegalaid.org)  
Provides a centralized national resource for legal aid, pro bono and criminal defender attorneys on legal issues related to all types of disasters.

## FOR OTHER ASSISTANCE AFTER A DISASTER

**Federal Emergency  
Management Agency (FEMA)**

[www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)  
You may also register online for disaster relief at [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov).  
800-621-3362

**California Governor's Office  
of Emergency Services**

[www.caloes.ca.gov](http://www.caloes.ca.gov)  
Provides comprehensive information about disaster preparedness as well as disaster recovery services.

**California Secretary of State**

<https://www.sos.ca.gov/business-programs/business-entities/disaster-recovery/>  
Provides information about disaster recovery services for businesses.

**California Department of  
Motor Vehicles**

[www.dmv.ca.gov](http://www.dmv.ca.gov)  
For replacement of driver licenses and identification cards.  
800-777-0133

## LEGAL ASSISTANCE AFTER A DISASTER



The State Bar  
of California

# LEGAL ASSISTANCE AFTER A DISASTER

The State Bar is a regulatory agency that oversees the legal profession in California, including the licensing of attorneys.

If you are a victim of a disaster, the State Bar can help you quickly find the legal advice and services you need. You may need help with insurance claims, emergency housing, applying for federal aid, negotiating with contractors, replacing wills and other legal documents, or other issues.

Whatever your situation, the State Bar is here to help.

While the State Bar cannot represent clients or refer you to a particular attorney, the agency can provide reliable information about where to go for legal services after a disaster. If you need a lawyer, the State Bar can connect you with a certified lawyer referral service in your community.

There are many organizations in California dedicated to helping people after a disaster, including those that offer free or low-cost legal help. Many of these groups offer services in multiple languages. The organizations listed in this pamphlet can be a starting point for helping you find the legal services you need.



Looking for information about legal services in your native language?  
**Call the State Bar at 866-44-CA-LAW.**

This pamphlet is also available in:

Spanish Español • Vietnamese Tiếng Việt  
Korean 한국어 • Chinese 中文  
• Russian Русский • Tagalog

## LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOLLOWING A DISASTER

If you are the survivor of a disaster in California—such as an earthquake, wildfire, or flood—you may need legal assistance.

### What kind of legal help is available?

The State Bar can help you find an attorney or legal aid organization in your area who can help you with:

- Securing disaster-related government benefits such as disaster unemployment assistance (DUA).
- Filing claims for life, medical, or property insurance.
- Landlord-tenant negotiations, including price gouging.
- Contracts with service providers, such as construction companies.
- Mortgage and foreclosure issues.
- Worker safety and wage theft issues.

### How can I find an attorney?

The State Bar can connect you with a certified lawyer referral service,\* legal aid organizations, and other resources. Free and low-cost services are available throughout the state, as well as services in multiple languages.

### Where do I go to replace documents?

It may take time to replace the documents you have lost in a disaster. We suggest you start with identity documents, such as your drivers license or identity card. The California Department of Motor Vehicles\* can provide replacements. For other documents, the State Bar\* provides a list of agencies and information about getting replacements for birth certificates, marriage licenses, and other documents.

In some cases, Local Assistance Centers (LACs) will be set up so that disaster survivors may go to one location for resources, including to replace important documents. For federally declared disasters, LACs transition into Disaster Recovery Centers (DRCs), as part of FEMA, to offer these services. Legal assistance, coordinated through the State Bar and American Bar Association with legal aid organizations, is also often available at LACs and DRCs.

### What about federal aid (FEMA)?

Contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)\* as soon as possible after a disaster to file for assistance. If your request is denied, you may be eligible to file an appeal. You do not need an attorney to apply for FEMA benefits, but an attorney or a local legal aid organization may advise you about benefits and appeals.

### What about help for my business?

The California Secretary of State\* has established a team to streamline recovery efforts for businesses affected by disasters. A business attorney may also advise you about any legal issues related to your business operations and recovery.

### How can I avoid fraud?

Don't become a victim again after a disaster. Attorneys and their representatives are prohibited from:

- Soliciting clients at the scene of a disaster or accident, at a hospital, or on the way to a hospital.
- Soliciting clients who are unable to exercise reasonable judgment because of their physical, emotional, or mental state.
- Sending solicitations by mail unless they are clearly labeled as an advertisement.
- Promising a particular outcome from legal representation.



For more information about how to avoid fraud, and how to report fraud or other attorney misconduct, contact the State Bar.

*\*See back panel for contact information for these organizations.*