

5. FEMA's system, even now, has been the most difficult system to deal with compared to all the other systems I navigate. FEMA appears to change the guidelines, deadlines and definitions of what they require in mid stream. It is frustrating and very demeaning for the residents of the Gulf Coast to have to continue to prove they are worthy of these benefits when they are victims of a natural disaster.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

Michelle A Akers Date: 9/5/06

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Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



Zeynep Klein, LCSW
Hurricane Relief Team Case Manager
Caritas of Austin

Date: 9-8-06

timely. The current system wastes valuable time and places an unfair burden on evacuee families. FEMA's system has been confused from the beginning and has yet to be improved. I am hoping something can be done to prevent another family from becoming homeless that should not be.

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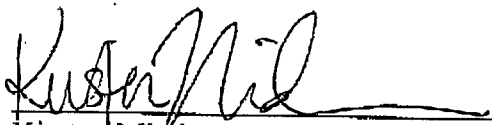

Date: 9/6/06

Nova McGiffert

Applicant A lived with her mother in New Orleans. They were separated after the hurricane and Client A ended up in Austin, TX and mother in Atlanta, GA. Both have acquired jobs in their respective cities and Client A is supporting her 17-year-old brother who is enrolled in school in Austin, TX. An appeal is written to explain. Several weeks later, another call to FEMA is made, and now there is a problem with the mother having flood insurance and there being no landlord-tenant relationship between the mother and Client A. None of the FEMA notices explain this, what to do, or how to address the problem. The notices are so vague FEMA uses them to claim a multitude of problems, one after another. There is no transparency, and information is being withheld which drags out the process of appeal and leads to evictions and homelessness.

4. The process of finding out what documentation is needed by FEMA can be extremely difficult. Applicant B has written three housing plans (a requirement for continued rent assistance FEMA says), all deemed inadequate by FEMA. The FEMA hotline representative is unable or unwilling to tell the survivor or me why the housing plan is inadequate. After waiting two weeks for the housing plan to be processed each time, Applicant B is now in court being evicted. Now she will not be eligible for HUD's Public Housing either. FEMA withheld information that was needed by my client, and has done so in many other cases. This is wrong. Disaster victims should know what is needed from them. These are only two examples amongst 25. As I stated earlier, I trust FEMA Helpline employees on the phone to be straightforward with the information that they have available to them. The problem may lie here---the complete information is not available to them either, and it is certainly not available to the evacuees or their advocates. Of course I cannot imagine what evacuees face without assistance from a caseworker. FEMA's system is extremely difficult with assistance from a caseworker like me who has an office, internet access and a fax machine. It must be even more difficult for a survivor without help. FEMA's notices must be improved at the very least so the process is fair for everyone.

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1746, I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.


Kirsten Mindrum

Date: 9/6/06