

Wills and estate planning

Estate planning and disaster recovery

Advance planning can help you avoid many common legal issues following a natural disaster. To avoid a situation where people inheriting your property have difficulty proving their ownership, it is a good idea to prepare a will stating who you want to inherit your property. After a relative who owns property has died, it is important for a family member to have the estate administered through the courts to ensure that all legal requirements are met. Additionally, preparing powers of attorney before you need them can ensure that someone you trust is available to handle financial matters or make medical decisions for you when you need it.

Essential documents such as wills and powers of attorney may be lost or damaged after a natural disaster. You should verify that your documents are intact, and if not, contact Legal Aid NC or another attorney to help you create new versions of your documents.

Legal Aid of North Carolina can assist in preparing several types of documents:

Last Will and Testament: In your will, you decide who will inherit your property after you die, including land, cars, bank accounts, jewelry and other items. If you do not have a will, then the law decides which of your closest relatives will inherit your property, without regard to your specific family situation.

Power of Attorney: A power of attorney allows another person to handle financial and business matters for you, including accessing bank accounts, paying bills, buying or selling property, hiring attorneys or accountants, etc. You can choose to allow someone else to begin handling these matters immediately, or only if you are medically unable to do so yourself. After signing a power of attorney, you still have the authority to handle your own business as well as allow the other person to handle it for you.

Health Care Power of Attorney: A health care power of attorney tells your doctors who you want to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to make them for yourself. This document can also put limits on the types of decisions the person is able to make for you.

Living Will: A living will states your end of life wishes about what should happen if you are unable to make medical decisions for yourself, for instance, if you are in a coma or suffering from dementia.

There are legal requirements these documents need to meet in order to be valid. An attorney can help you prepare these documents to ensure that your wishes are known and respected.

Contact Legal Aid of North Carolina for help | 866-219-5262