



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2005, Hurricane Katrina, the most destructive hurricane in the nation's history, hit the Gulf Coast, followed by Hurricane Rita less than a month later. The Hurricanes led to a myriad of legal needs. Many local attorneys, however, were displaced, and legal infrastructures in many communities were wiped out due to limited staff support and lack of office space, funding, electricity, and technological resources. Equal Justice Works, a non-profit organization located in Washington, D.C., identified the important legal needs in the Gulf Coast region and implemented an innovative legal aid disaster relief program to assist a number of the communities affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The program, designated the Katrina Legal Initiative (KLI), was comprised of three components: the Katrina Legal Fellowship program, the AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship program, and the Summer Corps program. Non-profit legal organizations served as host sites for KLI Fellows and Summer Corps members. Equal Justice Works selected and funded host sites for the two fellowship programs, and these sites then selected candidates for the Fellowship positions. Equal Justice Works selected and directly funded Summer Corps members who were interested in working at eligible host sites.

The Urban Institute was contracted by Equal Justice Works to evaluate the Katrina Legal Initiative. The purpose of the current report is to describe the evaluation of the three components of the Katrina Legal Initiative and to highlight findings from this study. This report details the implementation of the Katrina Legal Initiative; describes the program goals, activities, and impacts of the three programs; analyzes whether the programs met the stated goals; and offers recommendations for comparable programs in the future.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Data Collection***

In order to document the scope and nature of the Legal Initiative, researchers at the Urban Institute gathered information from multiple sources, including data collected by Equal Justice Works throughout the duration of the Initiative, interviews and focus groups with program participants and stakeholders, and site observations of five host organizations.

Progress reports documenting the Fellows' activities were completed by 100 percent of the 11 Katrina Legal Fellows and 63 percent of the 16 AmeriCorps Legal Fellows. AmeriCorps Legal Fellow grantee organizations were also required to complete host site reports which served as the document of record for reporting to the Corporation for National and Community Service. These reports provided information on various activities performed within host sites through the AmeriCorps grant but did not specify activities at the level of the individual attorneys (e.g. one grantee organization in Mississippi reported on the



combined activities of four different AmeriCorps Legal Fellows). Summer Corps members completed an exit survey on activities, program satisfaction, and legal skill development at the end of the summer term. This survey was completed by 86 percent of the 98 Summer Corps members.

To better understand the Katrina Legal Fellowship and AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship programs, the evaluation team attempted to contact every participating attorney for phone or in-person interviews. Seven of the 11 (64 percent) Katrina Legal Fellows and 11 of the 16 (69 percent) AmeriCorps Legal Fellows were reached for an interview. Interviews covered activities performed, perceived impacts of their work, satisfaction with the program, and general challenges and lessons learned about delivering legal assistance after a disaster. Phone interviews, similar in content to those performed with the Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows, were conducted with a small sample (11 percent) of the 98 Summer Corps law students to obtain a detailed picture of their contributions to the KLI program.

The research team conducted two individual stakeholder interviews and one stakeholder focus group to gather impressions of the Katrina Legal Initiative from those individuals who initiated and ran the program at Equal Justice Works during its implementation. Stakeholders included executive- and management-level staff and the Equal Justice Works consultant who performed a legal needs assessment.

Five host sites were selected for a more in-depth case study analysis of the Katrina Legal Initiative. The five sites included two Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funded organizations, a legal funding agency that supports other state organizations to provide free legal aid, an advocacy organization that focuses on systemic social injustices, and an organization whose mission was to find and match pro bono volunteers with clients in need. During these site visits, executive directors from these agencies were interviewed, focus groups were held with selected host site staff, and a sample of case files were reviewed to better understand of the scope and nature of legal services provided by KLI attorneys. Interviews with directors and staff covered the same areas as described above in the Katrina Legal Fellow and AmeriCorps Legal Fellow interviews.

The evaluation team also attempted to collect quarterly (dating January 2005 to June 2008) client services data from the case study host organizations to determine how the Legal Fellows affected the capacity of host organizations. However, concerns over limited data and unstable baselines prohibited meaningful analyses on changes in organizational capacity caused expressly by the Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows.

A small sample (N=25) of clients served at three of the case study host sites was also interviewed to determine client perceptions of services. These interviews were used to further develop the researchers' understanding of services provided and satisfaction with



these services and are not intended to serve as a representative view of all clients. Clients were selected by KLI Fellows after it was determined that random sampling was impractical due to unusable and out-of-date contact information.

### *Analyses*

Interview responses were coded and analyzed with qualitative software to identify themes, and basic descriptive statistics were used to analyze Equal Justice Works survey data, host site reports, and data on activities performed from progress reports and interview and focus group responses. Both AmeriCorps and Summer Corps program outputs were compared to established performance measurement goals. However, due to the timing of the Hurricanes, the information gathered through host site reports did not align with the grant cycles. Therefore, the evaluation team compared the outputs of both AmeriCorps terms to the combined performance measurement goals of 2005 and 2006. While this method does not allow the level of detail to determine whether the AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship program met its goals each grant period, it will provide an indicator of the success of the program overall. Some goals were estimated based on a set of performance measurement goals for a larger AmeriCorps and Summer Corps class, including attorneys and law students who were not part of the Katrina Legal Initiative. No performance goals were set for the Katrina Legal Fellowship program; therefore program outputs are not compared to any pre-established goals.

Administrative records from three sites were used to illustrate general trends in client demographics and legal needs over time in the Gulf Coast region. Trends were first examined individually by site, but data was then combined once it was seen that patterns were similar across the three sites.

### *Caveats and Cautions*

Some caveats to the study findings should be noted. While data were collected from a variety of sources to obtain a wide range of perceptions on the impacts of the Katrina Legal Initiative, estimates of activity participation and program outputs may be imprecise due to (a) self-reporting, (b) missing progress reports, and (c) limitations of host sites' client services data. An additional caution is given to remind readers that the sample of interviewed clients is extremely small in comparison to the number of clients served through the Katrina Legal Initiative. Due to both sample size and the non-randomized selection strategy, the included client opinions should be viewed as a small subset of possible client experiences and should not be interpreted as a representative sample.

Regarding the analyses comparing program outputs to performance measurement goals, readers should take caution in interpreting comparisons made to estimated performance measurement goals (e.g. all of the PMG for Summer Corps members and five of the PMG for the 2006 grant cycle) because these were not established with the special needs and



circumstances of the Katrina Legal Initiative in mind. A final caution is given that while we believe this report will be helpful to informing responses to other types of natural and manmade disasters, some of these findings may be specific to the particular circumstances of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita or the regions that were affected.

### **Implementation of the Katrina Legal Initiative**

The Katrina Legal Initiative grew out of a desire to help those along the Gulf Coast after stories emerged about the vast unmet legal needs arising after the Hurricanes. During the initial planning stage, Equal Justice Works staff developed a plan and budget, emailed a large group of attorney colleagues to gauge the level of interest in participating in a Katrina-related fellowship program, and conducted a needs assessment by sending a consultant to travel around the area to identify legal needs and prospective partners. The JEHT Foundation awarded a planning grant to assist with this process. Through the needs assessment, Equal Justice Works demonstrated an immense need for legal assistance in the Gulf Coast region, especially in the areas of housing, insurance, consumer matters, FEMA and other disaster benefits, and family law (see sidebar for examples of hurricane-related legal needs). Equal Justice Works raised additional funds from the JEHT Foundation, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), sponsoring law organizations, and individual donors to implement a three part program to address the unmet legal needs along the Gulf Coast. The three components of the Katrina

#### **Legal Needs After a Hurricane**

The following are examples of some of the most pressing hurricane-related legal issues:

##### *Housing*

- Tenant evictions so landlords can rent property at higher rates due to scarce housing
- Disagreements over obligations to pay rent or make repairs related to whether properties are inhabitable
- Lack of information about foreclosure moratoriums and failure to make mortgage payments on destroyed homes
- Auctioning of homes when evacuated homeowners cannot be located
- Contractor fraud for home repairs

##### *Insurance*

- Disputes over insurance denials based on damage being caused by water rather than wind
- Obtaining the appropriate amount of insurance benefits

##### *Consumer Matters*

- Bankruptcies and credit problems
- Hurricane Katrina-related fraud

##### *Claims for FEMA and*

##### *Other State Disaster Programs*

- Filing for FEMA and other disaster program (e.g. Road Home) benefits
- Appealing FEMA decisions to take back previously distributed benefits
- Documenting the amount of damage to a home
- Documenting legitimate ownership of properties passed down without official wills

##### *Family Law Matters*

- Interstate child custody disputes when parents evacuate and remain in different states
- Increased domestic violence and divorce due to extreme stress



Legal Initiative included: (a) the Katrina Legal Fellowship program, which funded two-year placements for more experienced attorneys, (b) the AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship program, which funded 9 to 11 month placements for attorneys, and (c) the Summer Corps program, which funded first- and second-year law students for 300 hour summer internships. Host organizations for the three components across multiple terms included eight Katrina Legal Fellowship sites, five AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship sites, and over 30 Summer Corps sites.

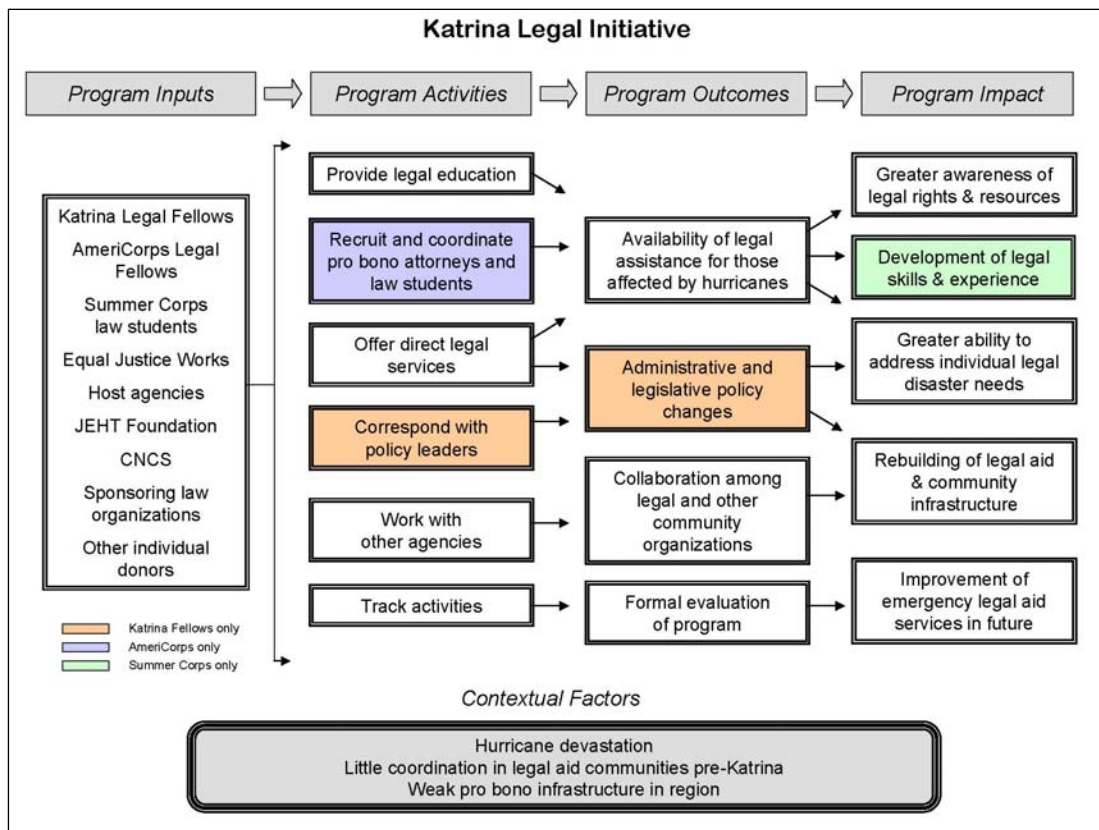
Equal Justice Works staff in Washington, D.C. provided training to both the Katrina Legal Fellow and AmeriCorps Legal Fellow participants and the host site staff. Summer Corps members received an orientation manual. Katrina Legal Initiative participants also convened on other occasions to share experiences and thoughts on best practices, including conferences and KLI meetings. Host organizations also participated in site visits from Equal Justice Works staff. Only one of the five host organizations we spoke with organized any training or orientation specifically for the new fellows; otherwise, KLI Fellows were trained on-site through routine office trainings or through “on-the-job” training. Participants in the Summer Corps program who were interviewed often did not receive formal training from Equal Justice Works or their host organization. However, Equal Justice Works provided a formal luncheon with speakers to recognize and reflect on the Summer Corps members’ work in both summer terms.

Program stakeholders reported many challenges in implementing an initiative of this scope in a compressed time period. Equal Justice Works had to devise a novel legal program designed for disaster relief, as no other legal disaster programs of this type were known to exist at the time. Equal Justice Works also encountered challenges with funding acquisition, development of relationships with host organizations, placing attorneys in the field in a timely manner, selecting sites in one the weakest areas in the country for public interest law while the region was still in crisis, and handling the immense burden on Equal Justice Works in terms of time, money, and emotional strain. Although Equal Justice Works reported many difficulties in implementing the Katrina Legal Initiative, stakeholders reported being incredibly proud of the program and found their role in the program development to be very personally rewarding.



## Analysis of Katrina Legal Initiative

Figure 1. Logic Model for the Katrina Legal Initiative



### Target Population and Client Needs

The Katrina Legal Initiative was intended to reach traditionally underserved individuals with legal needs who were impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Most of the KLI members reached the target population by being located in the midst of the devastated areas, making frequent outreach trips to the affected areas, manning statewide legal call centers, or focusing on finding and matching pro bono volunteers for other areas of the state. However, two AmeriCorps Legal Fellows at the Alabama host site did not come in contact with many hurricane survivors due to their distance from the areas most strongly affected by the storms. Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows described the clients they saw as typically being low-income, and many were single with a minority or disability status. Administrative data from three host sites shows a general rise in clients after the Hurricanes with stronger increases in Hispanic, African American, female, and middle-aged clients.



The legal needs in Gulf Coast communities grew dramatically after the Hurricanes, increasing burden on legal aid organizations that were experiencing their own impacts of the storms. The number of open cases initially dropped in the third quarter of 2005 when the Hurricanes struck, but then substantially rose and remained at higher levels than before the storms, even as far out as 2008. Participants handled legal matters directly related to the Hurricanes (e.g. insurance claims, federal and state disaster program benefits), legal problems caused indirectly by the storms (e.g. contractor fraud, divorce, domestic violence), and some seemingly non-disaster related, albeit still much-needed, casework (e.g. drafting wills, working on wrongful convictions).

Importantly, Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows who served for longer periods of time also faced the challenge of adapting to changing needs in the community. Some interviewed individuals reported a progression of the legal issues they saw in the community. For instance, FEMA benefits and housing were two legal needs that manifested immediately after the disaster. Legal issues such as insurance, family law, and employment followed later, while consumer matters and contractor fraud were issues that emerged further out. Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows had to identify these changing needs and prepare accordingly to meet these needs. Administrative data from a sample of host sites showed significant increases in home title succession, family law, landlord-tenant, and employment cases.

### ***Program Activities***

The activities performed by the KLI participants align with the anticipated program activities described in the program logic model (p. vi). Through direct legal assistance such as client representation, legal clinics and phone work, Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows provided direct legal assistance to at least 5,411 individuals and 7,132 individuals, respectively. Katrina Legal Fellows also participated in three class action lawsuits and community lawyering. Summer Corps members assisted in the provision of direct legal services for at least 4,504 clients within their host organization through activities such as drafting legal documents, interviewing clients, and performing legal research. Furthermore, AmeriCorps Legal Fellows increased legal assistance indirectly through recruiting and coordinating 4,065 pro bono attorneys and law students who performed additional legal services for clients. Katrina Legal Fellows also worked with about 1,060 pro bono attorneys and law students and helped to train volunteers across the country through web-based training modules and seminars in different states.

Additionally, participants in all three program components helped inform the community on particular legal issues and on legal rights and resources for legal help. AmeriCorps Legal Fellows presented to an estimated 2,400 people and created or helped create materials distributed to an estimated 5,700 individuals. Summer Corps members reached an even



greater number of people through educational endeavors, including an estimated 5,313 people through presentations and 13,765 people through distributed educational materials. While the researchers were unable to reliably estimate the number of individuals reached by Katrina Legal Fellows' educational efforts due to interview limitations, it is likely that the Fellows produced similar numbers.

Katrina Legal Fellows also addressed policy issues. Katrina Legal Fellows helped to modify and monitor disaster relief policies and programs through media attention, legislative advocacy, and educating other legal professionals and program administrators about how procedures could be best changed in light of their experiences working with clients "on the ground." These interactions with policymakers and other advocacy work occurred both locally and nationally and often were the product of collaborative alliances with other organizations. Katrina Legal Fellows estimated these activities improved the lives of well over 143,900 community members.

Through the above listed activities, the Katrina Legal Fellows, AmeriCorps Legal Fellows, and Summer Corps members formed partnerships with other organizations in the community. Combined, an estimated 670 collaborative relationships were made through the work of the Katrina Legal Initiative. When compared to performance measurement objectives established at the outset of the program implementation, both the AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship and Summer Corps programs met and, in many cases, far exceeded the expected goals. The research team was unable to compare Katrina Legal Fellowship outputs to performance measurement goals as there were no previously set quantified objectives.

**Table 1. Katrina Legal Initiative Activities**

Activity Outputs	KLF Quantity	ALF Quantity	SC Quantity
Clients Served	5411	7132	4504
Legal Clinics	154	357	N/A
Pro Bono Attorneys	315	2860	N/A
Pro Bono Law Students	745	1205	N/A
Collaborative Relationships	222	209	240

### ***Program Impacts***

KLI participants, host site staff, and program stakeholders reported the program activities led to significant impacts. These impacts were felt in four primary areas: the host organizations, individuals in the community, the program participant, and the community. The direct legal



services provided by Katrina Legal Fellows, AmeriCorps Legal Fellows, Summer Corps members, and their pro bono volunteers increased capacity at various legal aid organizations in the Gulf Coast region. The passion and energy of the AmeriCorps Legal Fellows was also credited with revitalizing other overwhelmed staff members who were feeling “burnt out.” The Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows were also perceived as improving the host organization’s relationships with other entities, increasing awareness about the organization, and, particularly in the case of the Katrina Legal Fellows, raising their credibility or expertise. Furthermore, some directors felt the increased awareness of their organization helped open options with other national funders; Equal Justice Works also continued to fund some organizations after the Katrina Legal Initiative ended.

Finally, two organizations that did not focus on direct legal work prior to Hurricane Katrina have continued to offer or coordinate legal assistance with the help of AmeriCorps Legal Fellows and a Katrina Legal Fellow who have remained at the organization as permanent staff. When asked about burdens, additional reporting requirements and the need to train less-experienced attorneys were listed as drawbacks for the AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship program. However, host site staff felt that the assistance provided by Equal Justice Works far outweighed these inconveniences. No interviewed host organization staff felt burdened by hosting Katrina Legal Fellows.

Through direct legal assistance, many individuals received legal help that would otherwise have been unaffordable. Program participants also made a particular effort to try to reach out to individuals through going door to door in FEMA trailer parks, recruiting pro bono volunteers who speak Spanish and Vietnamese to reduce language barriers, and traveling to homeless shelters and rural areas to conduct legal clinics. These outreach and other education efforts helped to increase awareness of legal rights and legal resources in the community. Katrina Legal Fellows and one AmeriCorps Legal Fellow also had widespread effects through impact litigation. Through two class action lawsuits, FEMA was required to halt recoupment efforts and publicize a phone number for reporting violations of disability-accessible trailers.

Interviewed clients reported varying levels of satisfaction. Clients who only received brief advice or whose cases were refused or never responded to expressed dissatisfaction. On the other hand, clients who obtained legal assistance reported extremely high satisfaction, even if their case was still pending or did not necessarily turn out in their favor. The most common suggestions for improved services were increased advertising, more staff, and faster services.

Beyond the host organizations and individuals in the community, the Katrina Legal Initiative also impacted those who participated in the program. Summer Corps participants reported improving their legal skills and building professional networks through the



experience. Katrina Legal Fellows, AmeriCorps Legal Fellows, and Summer Corps members reported continued or strengthened commitment to helping underserved populations. Furthermore, Equal Justice Works stakeholders also reported that the Katrina Legal Initiative raised the profile of their organization, opened up new funding avenues, boosted morale in the organization, and brought Equal Justice Works into the arena of disaster relief.

Finally, the Katrina Legal Initiative appeared to have impacted the local communities and their ability to rebuild. Katrina Legal Fellows helped to modify and monitor disaster relief policies and programs through media attention, legislative advocacy, and educating other legal professionals and program administrators about how procedures could be changed to best help community members. Through these efforts, Katrina Legal Fellows fought against funds being diverted away from individuals to a state port construction project, modified the application process and eligibility requirements of existing programs, and guided the development of new programs. Many of those interviewed felt that the AmeriCorps Legal Fellows helped strengthen the pro bono infrastructure in areas traditionally considered weak in the area of public interest law.

### ***Program Perceptions***

Satisfaction with the Katrina Legal Initiative was, for the most part, high all around, and many of the staff and KLI participants gave enthusiastic endorsements of Equal Justice Works and the support they provided. Subjective ratings of program participants' experience tended to be high. The average rating (on a scale of 1-10) of the overall experience was 8.9 for Katrina Legal Fellows, 7.7 for AmeriCorps Legal Fellows, and 8.5 for Summer Corps members.

Although no burdens were mentioned by host site staff in regards to the Katrina Legal Fellowship program, one drawback mentioned by multiple executive directors was the reporting requirement for the AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship. Furthermore, a few of those interviewed felt that local attorneys may have been better equipped since they were more connected with the local community. While most KLI members reported positive experiences, some program participants reported dissatisfaction with host sites and problems with funding. The most common suggestions for improvement included making the Katrina Legal Fellowship longer to encompass the full life of cases and more of the recovery process, facilitating a greater sense of community for the Summer Corps members by having more contact with Equal Justice Works and other Summer Corps participants, and increasing opportunities for horizontal networking and coordination among the AmeriCorps Legal Fellows and Katrina Legal Fellows in order to learn from each other's experiences.



### *Challenges of Disaster Legal Aid and Lessons Learned*

Delivering services after a disaster presents challenges that require special support. KLI participants and host site staff described a variety of situations hindering their ability to provide legal assistance. Host organizations and KLI participants dealt with crumbled infrastructure within organizations and within the region in general. Some organizations lost office space, staff, technological resources, and basic needs such as electricity for long periods of time. KLI participants noted the importance of being able to work in a mobile fashion in the aftermath of a disaster and reported substantial need for equipment to facilitate this type of work such as laptops with roaming wireless internet and portable copy machines. In addition, some sites had trouble offering adequate supervision while working in a crisis mode.

Another major challenge was dealing with novel legal issues introduced by the disaster. For instance, some issues had not occurred before on such a widespread level (e.g. custody issues when parents have evacuated to different regions), and attorneys needed to navigate new disaster programs, which many complained lacked transparency and had frequently changing policies. With the emergence of novel legal issues, new government programs, and the necessity for innovative modes of service delivery, KLI participants felt that information resources such as handbooks and resource guides would have been extremely advantageous to their work. Many Fellows suggested the best assistance would be talking with another legal professional who has either performed this type of work in the past or who is currently doing disaster legal aid. Interviewees also mentioned flexibility and creativity as crucial traits for individuals involved in this type of work.

Many KLI stakeholders and participants felt attorneys needed to be in the field as soon as possible, whether to help out with the Disaster Relief Centers, handle the outpouring of volunteer offers, perform assessments of the legal system, or be on the ground for early guidance in policy decision-making. Equal Justice Works felt the role of the consultant who performed the initial legal needs assessment was a critical component to the success of the Katrina Legal Initiative.

Overall, most people found the post-disaster work to be very difficult and emotionally draining, and the theme of personal care frequently came up with those who were interviewed. Some of this strain and frustration was related to managing the drastic increase in caseload, continually hearing difficult and traumatizing stories, and dealing with special client challenges such as illiteracy, lack of transportation, client transience, and mental health problems.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

The Katrina Legal Initiative was formed by Equal Justice Works, with the support of the Corporation for National and Community Service, the JEHT Foundation, sponsoring law firms, and private donors, to provide legal assistance for individuals and communities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The three components to this Initiative (the Katrina Legal Fellowship, AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship, and Summer Corps programs) were designed to provide assistance through legal education, direct legal services, and the building of a pro bono network of volunteer attorneys and law students. In addition, KLI members were expected to interact with policymakers and work with other organizations to help build collaboration between and among legal organizations and other community groups. Using the logic models as guides for the evaluation, the activities and perceived impacts described by those interviewed throughout this study appear to meet the expected program characteristics and goals. Furthermore, when compared to performance measurement objectives established at the outset of the program implementation, both the AmeriCorps Legal Fellowship and Summer Corps programs often met, and in many cases, exceeded the expected goals. The Katrina Legal Fellowship program did not have set performance measurement objectives.

While the Katrina Legal Initiative boasts significant benefits, there were some challenges that should be mentioned. Program stakeholders at Equal Justice Works reported large burdens on the organization in terms of emotional stress, staff time, and money. Equal Justice Works faced additional challenges in implementation, particularly with selecting suitable host sites, building relationships, and maintaining strong communication links over several years. Many of the challenges encountered by Equal Justice Works were associated with the circumstances of the disaster: (a) the Hurricanes hit a region that already had a weak infrastructure in terms of pro bono and public interest law, (b) the local organizations were dealing with devastating impacts of the storms on their own organizations, which made it more difficult for them to support the additional responsibilities of a fellowship placement (although these organizations in crisis were in most need of outside help), and (c) the urgent need for assistance required an immediate response from Equal Justice Works staff, which did not allow for as much preparation time as some program stakeholders desired. Equal Justice Works dealt with these challenges through applying more flexibility to the program guidelines (e.g. allowing AmeriCorps Legal Fellows to provide more direct legal services themselves or focusing on recruiting private attorneys rather than law students if there were no local law schools) and modifying placements when necessary.

Host organizations reported few negative impacts; a few directors mentioned additional reporting requirements and the need to train less-experienced attorneys as somewhat inconvenient. However, these directors agreed that the substantial benefits of the program outweighed these drawbacks. Program participants, in general, appreciated the opportunity



to participate in the Katrina Legal Initiative, although some AmeriCorps Legal Fellows reported difficulties with host organizations and Summer Corps members requested more contact with Equal Justice Works and other Summer Corps members.

The evaluation concludes that Equal Justice Works and its partners succeeded in implementing a much-needed and much-appreciated program that assisted not only individuals in the communities impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita but also helped rebuild the legal infrastructure in these communities. It is laudable that Equal Justice Works was able to implement a program of this scope and novelty within the short implementation period required by the urgency of the disaster. In fact, they not only achieved their goals but exceeded many of them, even in the face of the extraordinary circumstances of a chaotic disaster aftermath. Furthermore, several interview respondents and stewards of organization records cautioned that information given was likely underestimated due to unreliable recording of all service contacts (e.g. in the beginning months after the Hurricanes or in alternate venues such as legal clinics or call centers). Therefore, it is possible that the described activities and impacts do not fully capture the entirety of this program's benefits.

With the purpose of improving future disaster relief legal aid efforts, recommendations are made to consider the following:

- (a) For programs specifically targeting disaster populations, resources should be placed in the most affected areas to have the largest impact on clients and broken legal infrastructure. More distant sites may be better suited for short-term disaster relief efforts when residents have evacuated to outside areas.
- (b) Fundraising efforts should begin as early as possible to take advantage of the period immediately after a disaster when most people choose to donate.
- (c) Program administrators should participate in training to recognize the special difficulties of disaster aid, acquire more cultural competency, identify symptoms of post-traumatic stress in others, recognize signs of stress in one's self, and learn how to effectively deal with the emotional burden of assisting those providing disaster aid and hearing about their experiences. It is also suggested that when requesting funds for program administration, some attention is paid to the special needs of program administrators dealing with extra burdens inherent to disaster programs.
- (d) Attention should be paid to sending Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows into the field quickly so as not to lose the momentum of pro bono generation in the first few months when people are most likely to volunteer their time and organizations are in high need of someone to coordinate the outpouring of volunteers.



- (e) It is also recommended that there be more opportunities for Katrina Legal Fellows and AmeriCorps Legal Fellows to convene for the purposes of networking and exchanging ideas while having the chance to speak with others experiencing similar difficult and sometimes emotional challenges.
- (f) To obtain the most informative data and reduce frustration at host sites, it is important to set clear expectations from the beginning about what data is needed and take steps to improve capabilities of performance measurement.
- (g) Additional site visits by Equal Justice Works staff members are suggested to help with (a) selecting sites, (b) developing relationships with host sites that may have negative perceptions of federal programs because of other federal responses, (c) understanding dissatisfaction or issues with host sites, and (d) understanding client needs, the nature of work, and challenges faced by participating attorneys.
- (h) Recognizing that supervision and other ethical responsibilities may become a lower priority in a crisis environment, it is recommended that Equal Justice Works make supervision guidelines explicit with host sites at the outset of the program, provide materials to assist supervisors, and frequently monitor the supervision situation.

The Katrina Legal Initiative has had great success in the Gulf Coast region, helping to repair and expand the legal aid infrastructure following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The Katrina Legal Initiative can serve as a model for future disaster relief programs and for efforts to respond to other types of crises, such as the foreclosure crisis. Lessons learned from the experiences of those involved in the Katrina Legal Initiative can be employed to improve future responses to situations with mass legal needs.