

The Center for Urban Pedagogy and Pro Bono Net Announce “Figuring Out FEMA”

Figuring Out FEMA - New resource helps natural disaster survivors apply for assistance from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Pro Bono Net, in partnership with the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) and designer Carmen López, is pleased to announce the release of “Figuring Out FEMA,” a pocket-sized visual resource for disaster survivors. “Figuring Out FEMA” is part of CUP’s *Public Access Design* program, a series of projects that use design to make complex issues accessible to people most affected by them. The guide can be downloaded for free at <http://welcometocup.org/Projects/PublicAccessDesign/FiguringOutFEMA>.

“Figuring Out FEMA” includes information on:

- How to apply for FEMA’s Individual Assistance program
- Who can apply for FEMA help
- Understanding the application process and loans disaster survivors may be eligible for
- Preparing for FEMA inspections and avoiding contractor scams
- Appealing a FEMA determination letter
- Where to find legal help

“Recovery after a disaster can be overwhelming and long-lasting,” said Pro Bono & Strategic Initiatives Manager, Jeanne Ortiz-Ortiz, at Pro Bono Net. “We created Figuring Out FEMA to support disaster survivors in that journey, and point them to resources that can help. We are grateful for CUP’s partnership, team, and work in making this project a reality.”

“Gathering documents, filling out applications, and also dealing with the many issues that are created by a disaster result in frustration, exhaustion, and a lack of time to research what FEMA is and how survivors can obtain assistance. This guide allows survivors to understand the process with a quick glance,” said Shrushti Kothari, Disaster Relief Unit Staff Attorney at Lone Star Legal Aid.

“After a disaster, many survivors have an overwhelming amount of information to process in the midst of great loss. This pocket guide provides clear, helpful tips and information that simplifies what is a very complicated process,” said Julie Rattray, Disaster Legal Services Pro Bono Coordinator at Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles.

“The complexity of the FEMA application process is a major barrier for survivors of a natural disaster to get the assistance they need,” said CUP Executive Director, Christine Gaspar. “We

were excited to work with Pro Bono Net to create such a needed tool that uses engaging visuals and clear language to break down a confusing system and create a pathway to action.”

Pro Bono Net would like to extend our special thanks to Yasmin Safdié and Clair Beltran at CUP for spearheading the project, along with partners and organizations for their invaluable feedback in the creation of this resource, including Shrushti Kothari at Lone Star Legal Aid, Carla Krystyniak from the Equal Justice Works Disaster Recovery Legal Corps and Lone Star Legal Aid, Brittanny Perrigue at Texas RíoGrande Legal Aid, Krista Scully from the Alaska Bar Association, Julie Rattray from Neighborhood Legal Services of Los Angeles, and staff and community members from Red Hook Initiative and Long Island Cares.

To order a physical copy or for a free digital download of “Figuring Out FEMA,” visit <http://welcometocup.org/Projects/PublicAccessDesign/FiguringOutFEMA>.

Interested in learning more about this project?

- Join us for a webinar, “Figuring Out FEMA: A Trauma-informed Resource for Disaster Survivors” on Wednesday, January 29, 2020 at 1:00 pm ET by registering [here](#).

About the Center for Urban Pedagogy

The Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) is a nonprofit organization that uses the power of design and art to increase meaningful civic engagement, particularly among historically underrepresented communities. CUP’s work addresses the need of communities struggling to understand complex public policies and decision-making processes that impact their lives, from affordable housing to labor rights. By collaborating directly with these communities to create simple, accessible, and visual explanations, CUP provides individuals with the tools to claim their rights, advocate for their needs, and fight for social justice in their communities. www.welcometocup.org

About Carmen López

Carmen is a design researcher and social innovator with the heart of an artist. She combines her visual communication skills, design thinking and ethnographic research to create services, products, and relationships with the goal of empowering people and making their lives better. She is a graduate from the Design for Social Innovation Master’s program at the School of Visual Arts and her work includes design projects with Dalberg, the United Nations Foundation, and Matter Unlimited. <https://www.carmenrosalopez.com/>

About Pro Bono Net

Pro Bono Net is a national nonprofit dedicated to building cutting-edge digital tools and fostering collaborations with the nation’s leading civil legal organizations. Pro Bono Net’s

comprehensive programs enable legal advocates to make a stronger impact, increase volunteer participation, and empower the public with resources and self-help tools to solve legal issues. www.probono.net.

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