

Bay Area Legal Services is a regional, nonprofit public interest law firm providing the highest quality legal counsel by:

- Assisting individuals and nonprofit groups with limited access to legal services;
- Resolving the legal problems of our clients; and
- Preserving the independence, hope, and dignity of those we serve.

Vision

Bay Area Legal Services aims to eliminate barriers to justice through high quality legal services, education, and community partnerships.

Who is eligible for our free legal services?

- Low-income residents of Hillsborough, Manatee, Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota counties
- Domestic violence victims throughout our service area, regardless of income
- Seniors (age 60 and older) living in other Florida counties through the Florida Senior Legal Helpline
- Nonprofit and community groups that serve low-income individuals or distressed communities
- Other clients who qualify under special programs.

For more information, visit our website at www.bals.org

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BALS is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. We receive funding from a variety of sources, including:

- Area Agency on Aging of Pasco-Pinellas
- Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney/Fowler White Boggs
- Carlton Fields Jordan Burt
- Children's Board of Hillsborough County
- Community Foundation of Tampa Bay
- Florida Attorney General's Office
- Florida Bar Foundation
- Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Florida Department of Elder Affairs
- Hillsborough County Bar Foundation
- Hillsborough County Board of County Commissioners
- Hillsborough County Clerk of the Court
- Holland & Knight
- Internal Revenue Service
- Legal Services Corporation
- Pasco County Board of County Commissioners
- Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners
- Senior Connection Center
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul South Pinellas
- Tampa Crossroads
- TECO Energy, Inc.
- The Children's Home
- The Spring of Tampa Bay
- United Way of Pasco County
- United Way Suncoast
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women



Home Repairs Do's and Don'ts After the Storm

PRESERVING INDEPENDENCE, HOPE, AND DIGNITY SINCE 1967



813-232-1343
www.bals.org

Disaster Information revised 12/14 by Community Legal Services of Mid-Florida



Watch out for Scams!

Victims of natural disasters should take care not be victimized a second time by unscrupulous adjusters, contactors or retailers.

Verify that an adjuster is licensed by calling Department of Financial Services Insurance Claim Hotline: **800-227-8676** (800-22-STORM).

Consumers should verify that a FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) or SBA (Small Business Administration) representative has a laminated photo ID card. A FEMA or SBA jacket or shirt is not proof of an affiliation.

“The price-gouging statute does not forbid making a profit but it does forbid profiteering.”

Consumers can check if a contractor is licensed at www.myfloridalicense.com.

Any suspected fraud or price gouging can be reported to the State Attorney General's office at **866-966-7226**.

Some Construction Contracting Do's and Don'ts

DO ask to see the contractor's license and make sure it matches the person showing it;

DO determine how long the contractor has been in business;

DO contact the Department of Business and Professional Regulation (850-487-2252) or www.myflorida.com to verify the current status of the license;

DO ask for references and check them out;

DO choose several contractors and get estimates from each; and

DO get the agreement in writing—read the contract, fill in all the blank spaces, make sure it contains the contractor's name, address, telephone number, license number, description of the work, completion date, and any warranty agreements.

DON'T hire a contractor who requires advance payment—arrange to pay upon completion or in installments;

DON'T sign the work completion certificate until all the work is satisfactorily completed;

DON'T pay cash; and

DON'T pull the construction permits.