

# Utilizing Public Health and Community Lawyering Practices to Support Community-based Disaster Recovery Groups

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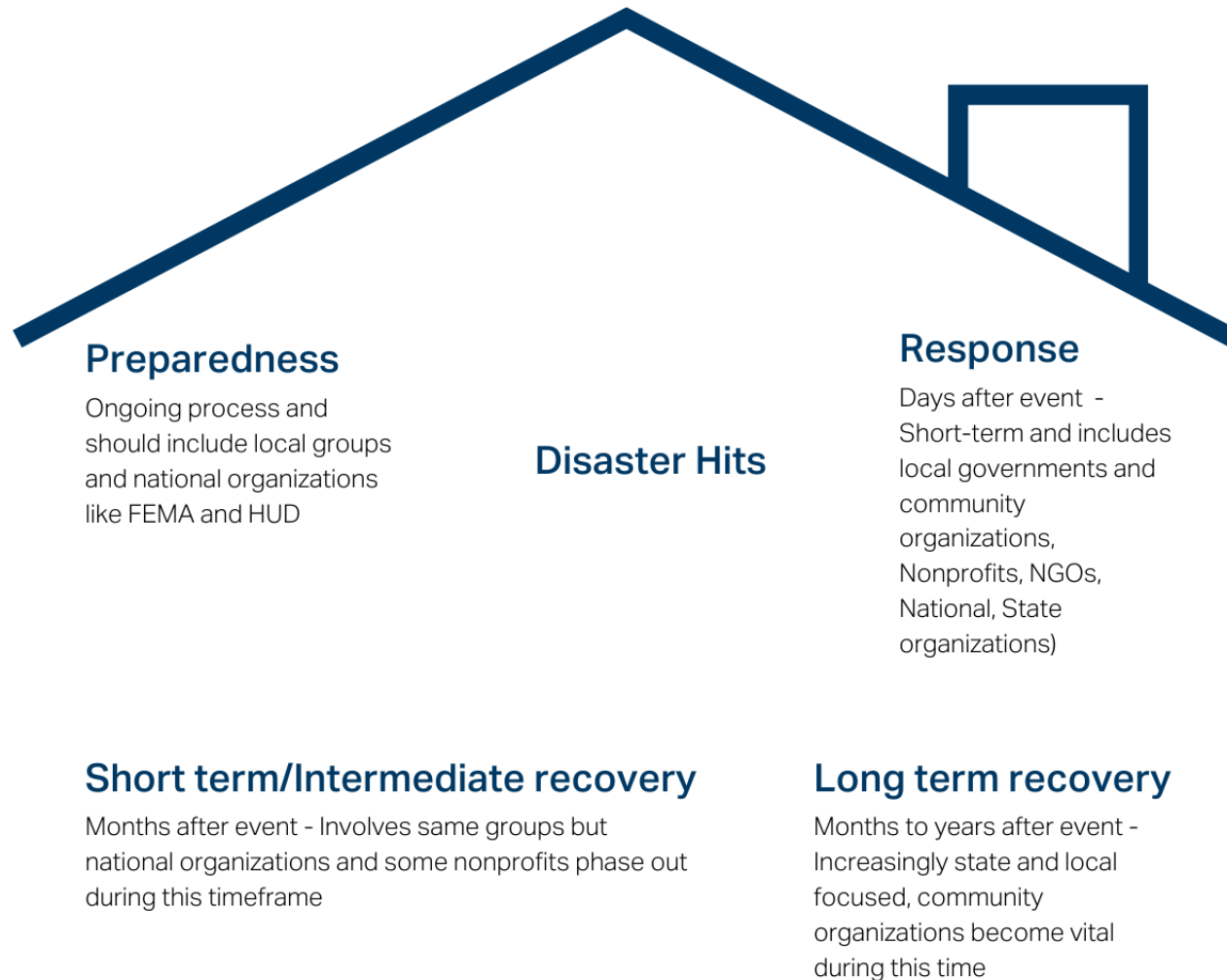
October 13, 2022



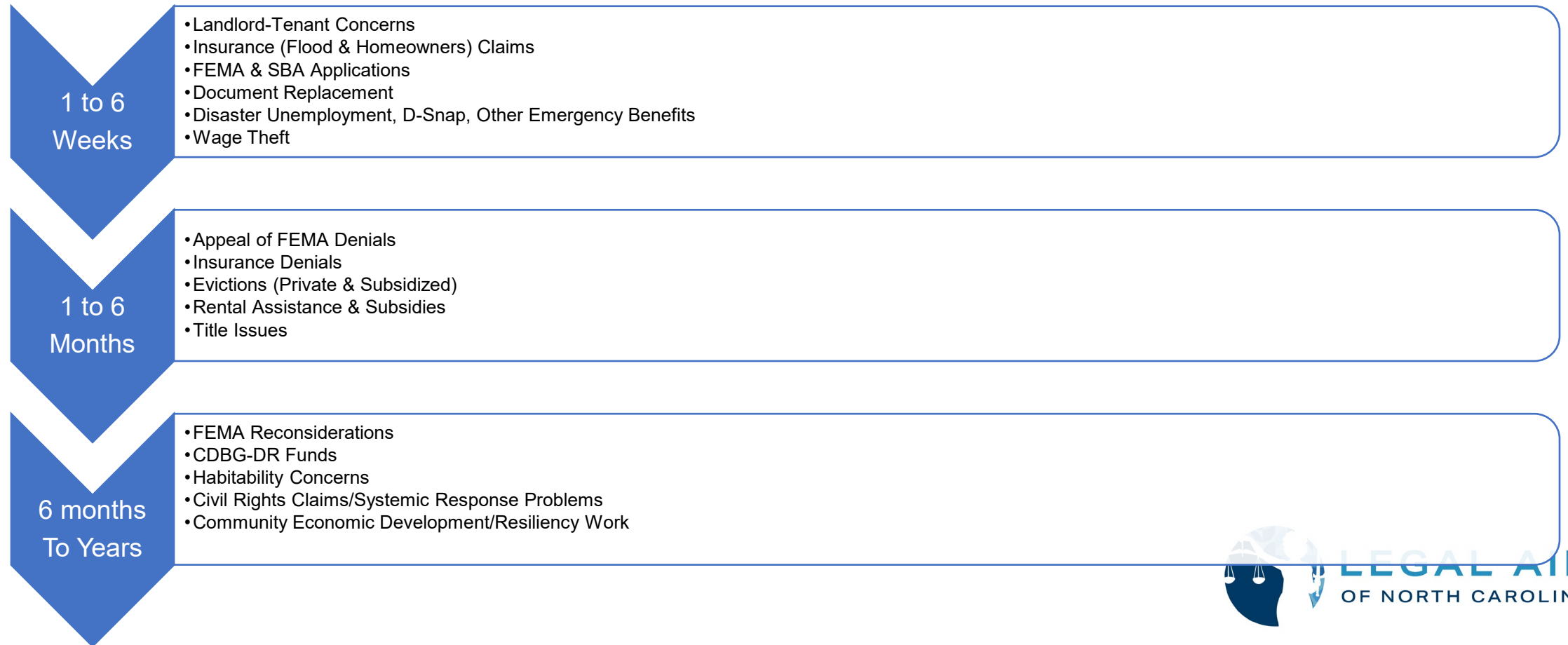
# Objectives

- Overview of Disaster Recovery Process
- Key players in Disaster Recovery
- Health Impacts of Disaster
- Barriers to Disaster Recovery
- Concepts of community engagement
- Working with Community Groups
- Examples from the field
- Questions

# Disaster Recovery Overview – Phases of Recovery



# Disaster Recovery Overview – Legal Needs by Recovery Phase



# Social Determinants of Health

## Social Determinants of Health



- Social factors have a massive impact on health outcomes (ASPE, 2022)
- Disaster recovery is a long-term initiative
- Clients continue to have immediate needs related to housing, healthcare access, food support, economic stability, and education needs

Social Determinants of Health  
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 Healthy People 2030



Graphic: Healthy People 2030, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Retrieved [date graphic was accessed], from <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

Source: A Whitman, et al. Addressing Social Determinants of Health: Examples of Successful Evidence-Based Strategies and Current Federal Efforts, ASPE, Office of Health Policy, 1 April 2022, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/e2b650cd64cf84aae8ff0fae7474af82/SDOH-Evidence-Review.pdf>

# Health Impacts of Disaster—Individual

Physical injury

Loss of safe and healthy housing

Increased food insecurity

Loss of consistent education access

Disruption of health services

Impact to financial stability

# Barriers to Equitable Disaster Recovery

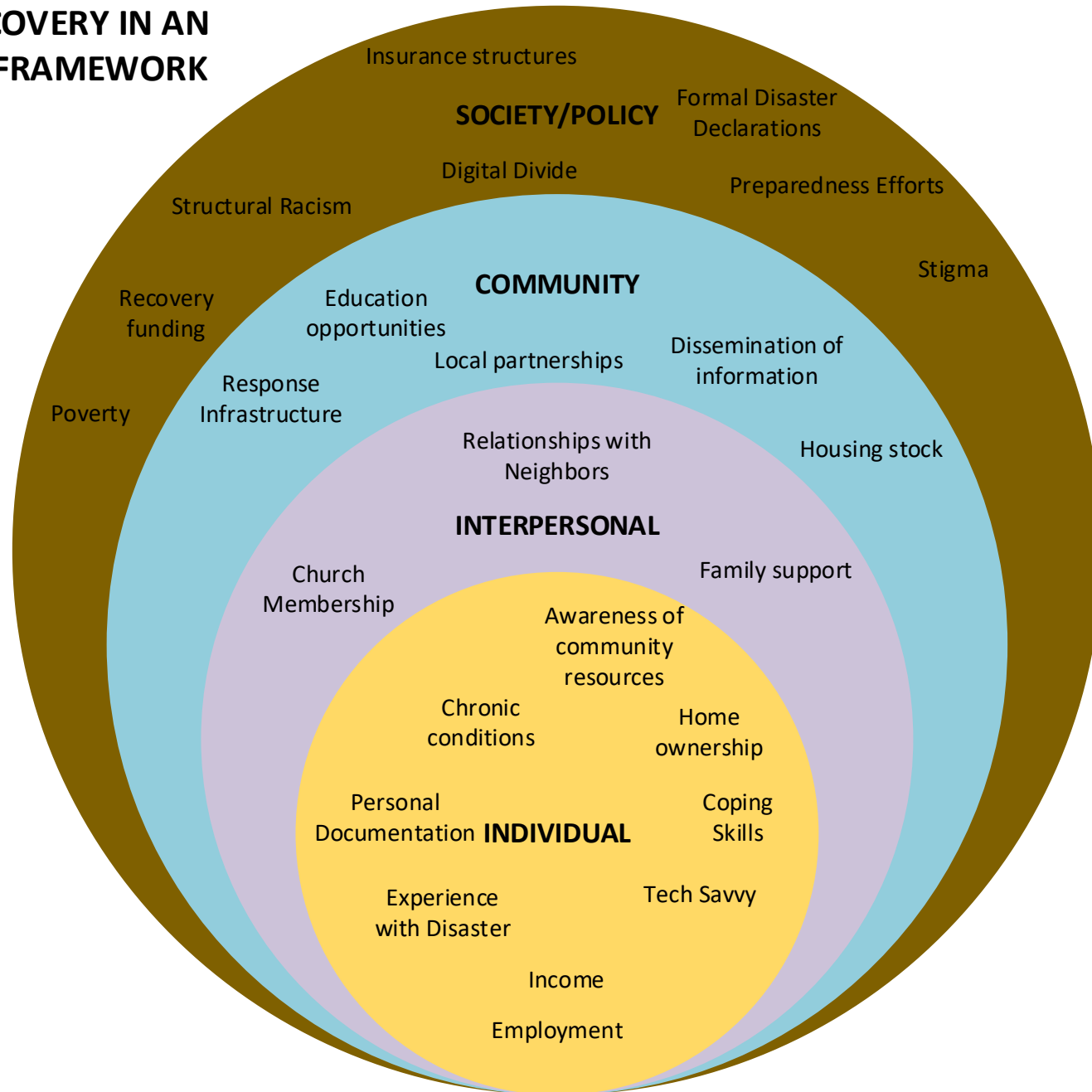
- “Low income and minority communities are more vulnerable to the risks of natural disasters, and they also struggle most to recover,” stated a Brookings article in 2017 after Hurricane Harvey.
- The Brookings report concluded “severe weather shocks exacerbate inequity.”
- Why?
  - Minority and low-income communities are often located in disaster-prone areas to begin with, full of environmental hazards.
  - For instance, in Eastern NC: Matthew in 2016, Florence in 2018 which also caused tornadoes, Tropical Storm Michael in 2018, Tropical Storm Dorian, 2019, Hurricane Isaias, and Hurricane Eta, both in 2020.
  - In Eastern NC: Approximately 33% minority, most counties poverty population is above the state average
  - Housing is located alongside hazards from environmental pollutants like coal ash and hog waste.
  - Affordable housing is difficult to find – The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates a shortage of 182,643 affordable rental units for very low-income families in North Carolina.

# Barriers to Equitable Disaster Recovery

- Why? (continued)
  - Barriers to assistance because of heirs property issues, and lack of legal documents due to historic and current racism causing lack of access to lawyers and court houses.
  - Unpaid taxes, lack of insurance, low home values and high mortgage balances limit access to recovery assistance.
  - Renters are the most vulnerable and recover the least well from disasters.



# DISASTER RECOVERY IN AN ECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK



# Concepts of Community Engagement- Public Health [CDC]

- Clarity of engagement goals
- Familiarity with client community
- Relationship and trust-building within community
- Community ownership of action
- Partnership is critical!
- Respect for community diversity
- Sustainability through community investment
- Flexibility and community-owned control
- Long-term commitment



# Concepts of Community Lawyering

- Sargent Shriver National Center on Poverty Law defines Community Lawyering as, "a process through which advocates contribute their legal knowledge and skills to support initiatives that are identified by the community and enhance the community's power."
- Post Disaster, community lawyering can:
  - Educate affected communities on various funding sources available during a disaster and on various processes for how assistance is given. This in turn empowers affected communities to be engaged in decisions around needs assessments, funds allocations, and every phase of the planning, recovery and rebuilding of their neighborhoods.
  - Help communities bring the issues important to them to the people in power ("issue visibility").

# Concepts of Community Lawyering

- The ultimate goal is equitable recovery. Per Policy Link, equitable recovery should be aimed at: "reversing patterns of segregation and disinvestment, preventing displacement, and promoting equitable revitalization."
- Community members and groups should tell the lawyers what this looks like to them.
- The idea is that those who are affected by a problem or an issue are best situated to determine the solution.

# Working with Community Groups

- Work to establish the trust of communities and groups you serve by listening and by BEING present;
- Attend meetings with the community, ABOUT the community;
- Be willing to let your concerns for the community take a back seat to the concerns of the community;
- Seek partnerships with other organizations and agencies that also serve your clients.

# Examples from the Field

Questions?



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