

NEWS RELEASE LOUISIANA JUSTICE INSTITUTE

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LOUISIANA JUSTICE INSTITUTE TO RELEASE REPORT ON RESIDENTS STILL LIVING IN FEMA TRAILERS MORE THAN TWO YEARS AFTER KATRINA

Louisiana Justice Institute (LJI), in partnership with the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), today release their public report on the dire circumstances of residents still living in FEMA trailers over two years after Katrina. A press conference will be held at the CDF offices at 1452 N. Broad Street in New Orleans, Louisiana, at 10 a.m. on Wednesday.

In early January 2008, LJI and CDF coordinated an interview and outreach project aimed at FEMA trailer residents across Louisiana. With the help of law student volunteers, our organizations conducted outreach to over 500 residents and interviewed over 150 residents. This report contains an analysis of the data gathered, as well as stories from the residents themselves.

According to the report to be officially released on Wednesday, the majority of residents living in FEMA trailers are employed. Residents living in FEMA trailers also tend to be older, with an emphasis on the elderly and disabled. 55% of residents interviewed were 50 years old or older and 22% were 62 years and older, and almost 40% reported that someone living in their trailer had "special needs" including a disability.

In addition, many residents reported health problems. Fifteen percent (15%) of the residents interviewed reported they were suffering from depression, anxiety, other symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health issues. In addition, 29% reported rashes, itchy eyes, breathing problems and other symptoms usually related to high levels formaldehyde in their FEMA trailer.

With FEMA reporting that over 100,000 people still live in FEMA trailers across the Gulf Coast, it is even more worrisome that 55% of residents interviewed report that if they were to be evicted from their FEMA trailer in the next few months they would have no family they could turn to for help and they expected to be homeless.

With this report, LJI and CDF want national attention focused on the dire circumstances of over 100,000 residents on the Gulf Coast still living in FEMA trailers. In addition, LJI calls on the U.S. government and the governments of the Gulf Coast states to develop a long-term plan to make sure that residents of the Gulf Coast have access to safe, affordable housing, as well as immediate and continued access to medical examinations and healthcare in order to gauge and address all health problems resulting from their exposure to high levels of formaldehyde.

The Louisiana Justice Institute (LJI) is a nonprofit, civil rights legal advocacy organization, devoted to fostering social justice campaigns across Louisiana communities of color and for impoverished communities. LJI is committed to assisting Louisiana residents in confronting and overcoming legal barriers that stymie their ability to live equitably in their chosen communities.