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Attack Victims Offered Free Legal Aid

Group to help those filing claims with federal fund

By Karen Freifeld
STAFF WRITER

A nonprofit organization has been established to provide free legal representation to those injured and the families of those killed in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Trial Lawyers Care, Inc. announced yesterday at a Manhattan news conference that it would link victims with attorneys who can file claims for them through the September 11th Victims Compensation Fund recently established by Congress.

The fund is intended to compensate victims for their personal injuries or the deaths of loved ones. It is an alternative to going to court and having to wait many months or years for a settlement.

The fund will provide for lost earnings and other employment-related benefits, in addition to compensation for grief and mental anguish. Awards will be offset by other sources of compensation, such as life insurance payouts and possibly charity.

Bob Grodberg, whose stepdaughter was on the American Airlines flight that crashed into the World Trade Center, said yesterday that he planned to file a claim with the fund with the free legal services of Leo Boyle, president of the American Association of Trial Attorneys, who is spearheading the effort.

"For our family and perhaps for the majority of claimants, this clearly was the way to go," Grodberg said. His stepdaughter, Lisa Fenn Gordenstein, 41, was an assistant vice president of TJX Corp., the parent company of T.J. Maxx and Marshall's stores. She was on a business trip from Boston to Los Angeles with six co-workers when the plane was hijacked. She is survived by two young daughters and a husband, David.

Colleen Micciulli of Oldbridge, N.J., also hopes to be compensated through the fund. Her 30-year-old husband, Bill, worked for Cantor Fitzgerald on the 104th floor of One World Trade Center.

Attorney David Golomb, who is coordinating the New York volunteer effort, said the attorneys would provide counseling to all those who seek it and file claims through the fund but would not represent anyone in connection with a lawsuit.

While some attorneys say litigation can take years, other lawyers say litigation may secure larger payouts than the fund can offer.

Trial Lawyers Care can be contacted through a toll-free number, 888-780-8637, or online at www.911lawhelp.org. All lawyers who offer their services must have at least five years' experience and meet other standards.

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