



# PROVIDER COMMUNICATION BULLETIN

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## ALL NETWORK PROVIDERS

### Side By Side Addresses Hurricane Helene Response

The Area Directors/Chief Executive Officers of North Carolina's LME/MCOs joined Kelly Crosbie, Director of the NC Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Use Services, on Oct. 7, 2024, to discuss ongoing actions in response to Hurricane Helene. Crosbie also talked about ways to take care of yourself during challenging times. Watch the [video recording](#) and [view the presentation](#) online.

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### Operational FastMed Locations in North Carolina

The North Carolina Association of Health Plans has shared a [list of operational FastMed locations](#). The list current as of Oct. 3, 2024.

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### Reminder: Temporary Flexibilities in Place for Medicaid Beneficiaries Due to Hurricane Helene Devastation

NCDHHS continues to work with state, federal, and local partners to help North Carolinians impacted by Hurricane Helene access needed care. Visit the [NC Medicaid Virtual Bulletin Board for Hurricane Helene Recovery Resources](#) for the latest updates and key resources.

Federal flexibilities are active statewide for NC Medicaid from Sept. 25, 2024, through the end of the state's Hurricane Helene Public Health Emergency declaration. The flexibilities are intended to support hospitals, psychiatric hospitals, critical access hospitals (including cancer centers), and long-term care hospitals to ensure:

- People can receive emergency medical treatment.
- There are places to provide hospital care to people.

- There are people to provide health care.
- Telemedicine is available.
- Hospitalized patients have continuity of care.
- People can get the care they need in a long-term care or skilled nursing facility.
- Acute care patients can stay longer.
- Patients get the care they need in the best environment.
- People with intellectual disabilities being cared for in facilities continue to receive services.
- People have the medical equipment and medicine they need.

For more information, review [Additional Temporary Flexibilities in Place for Medicaid Beneficiaries Due to Hurricane Helene Devastation](#) and the NC Medicaid Bulletin [Reminder to Providers on Hurricane Helene Approved Waivers for North Carolina](#).

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## Federal Emergency Prescription Assistance Program to Open for Certain Helene-Impacted Counties

The Emergency Prescription Assistance Program, or EPAP, helps people in a federally identified disaster area who do not have health insurance get the prescription drugs, vaccinations, medical supplies, and equipment they need. This program helps people and communities better cope with a disaster and reduces stress on the health care system.

People who are eligible for EPAP can file a claim at more than 72,000 retail pharmacies across the United States and its territories for prescription items that were lost, stolen, or destroyed because of a disaster. EPAP will open soon for certain Helene-impacted North Carolina counties.

For more information, including how to sign up, visit the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services website](#).

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## Help Available for Providers, First Responders

Help is available for providers, first responders, and volunteers who are experiencing stress, emotional fatigue, or a mental health crisis or who just need someone to talk to due to the impact of Hurricane Helene. Call the [Hope4NC Helpline](#) at 1-855-587-3463. Hope4NC is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

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## Food and Nutrition Services Updates

**Benefits to purchase hot foods:** Effective Oct. 4 through Nov. 3, 2024, North Carolinians enrolled in the [Food and Nutrition Services \(FNS\)](#) program can use their [benefits to purchase hot food](#) from authorized Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) retailers. Additionally, NCDHHS is working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to receive federal authority to operate a Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

**Work First/Child Protective Services Substance Use Initiative Food and Nutrition Services:** NCDHHS has shared the following information regarding questions on flexibility or interim alterations that have been made to FNS policy for applicants/recipients in counties impacted by Hurricane Helene. Work First/Child Protective Services (CPS) caseworkers will enter good cause for these individuals in the following counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Henderson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey, plus the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

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## Safe Water Usage Resource

NCDHHS urges safe water usage following Hurricane Helene. [Find ways to ensure your water is safe](#) and to prevent waterborne disease or illness.

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## Helpful Resources

- ReadyNC.gov: [Emergency Information](#)
- NCDHHS: [Hurricane Helene Recovery Resources](#)
- American Red Cross: [Reunification After Hurricane Helene](#)
- [FEMA Disaster Assistance](#)
- [SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline](#)
- NC Department of Environmental Quality: [Storm Response](#)
- NC Medicaid Resource Newsletter ([English](#)) ([Español](#))
- NC Board of Pharmacy: [Operating Pharmacies in Counties Affected by Hurricane Helene](#)

### NC Department of Public Safety (DPS) Resources:

- [Hurricane Helene](#)
- [County Emergency Management Agencies](#)
- If you are seeking a representative from the North Carolina Joint Information Center, email [ncempio@ncdps.gov](mailto:ncempio@ncdps.gov) or call 919-825-2599.
- [Learn how you can best help](#)
- For recovery resources for a resident impacted by the storm, email [IArecovery@ncdps.gov](mailto:IArecovery@ncdps.gov).

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