

DHB ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO: 07-24, HURRICANE HELENE-GUIDANCE FOR UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE BENEFITS (UIB)

DATE: November 18, 2024

SUBJECT: Hurricane Helene-Guidance for Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB)

DISTRIBUTION: County Departments of Social Services
Medicaid Supervisors
Medicaid Eligibility Staff

I. BACKGROUND

On September 28, 2024, President Biden approved Governor Roy Cooper’s request for a Federal Major Disaster Declaration for the following counties as a result of the impact of Hurricane Helene:

- Alexander (County)
- Alleghany (County)
- Ashe (County)
- Avery (County)
- Buncombe (County)
- Burke (County)
- Caldwell (County)
- Catawba (County)
- Clay (County)
- Cleveland (County)
- Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina
- Gaston (County)
- Haywood (County)
- Henderson (County)
- Jackson (County)
- Lincoln (County)
- Macon (County)
- Madison (County)
- McDowell (County)
- Mitchell (County)
- Polk (County)
- Rutherford (County)
- Transylvania (County)
- Watauga (County)
- Wilkes (County)
- Yancey (County)

Due to the disaster declaration, Governor Cooper signed Executive Order 322 outlining Unemployment Insurance changes related to Hurricane Helene.

During the period established by the Executive Order, eligible UIB recipients affected by the disaster may receive an additional \$250 of weekly benefits (not to exceed \$600 per week). The increase is funded by the state Department of Employment Securities (DES) and begins with all benefits issued on or after September 29, 2024, and shall remain in effect until further guidance.

Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) provides unemployment benefits to individuals who became unemployed as a direct result of the declared incident and who are **not** eligible for regular state unemployment insurance.

The purpose of this letter is to provide instructions for situations when the applicant/beneficiary receives one or more of the following benefits:

- State Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB)
- Federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

This guidance relates to processes for all Medicaid programs to address issues caused by Hurricane Helene. As other situations are identified, further guidance will be provided.

II. SPECIAL POLICY PROCEDURES

When an applicant/beneficiary that is or was living or working in one of the above disaster counties receives income from Unemployment Insurance Benefits, determine if the benefit is:

- State Unemployment Insurance or
- Federal Disaster Unemployment Assistance

A. MAGI Budgeting

1. UIB type, State Unemployment Insurance Benefits, is a **countable** source of income for all Medicaid eligibility determinations. Refer to policy [MA-3306 Modified Adjusted Gross Income \(MAGI\)](#).
2. DUA is **taxable** and therefore **countable** income for all MAGI budgeting eligibility determinations. Refer to policy [MA-3306 Modified Adjusted Gross Income \(MAGI\)](#).
3. NC FAST Instructions

There is only one Unemployment income evidence type available for selection within the Insurance Affordability application/case.

If a MAGI applicant/beneficiary is receiving more than one type of unemployment benefit:

- a. The caseworker must enter two separate Unemployment income evidence to account for each benefit type, UIB or DUA, and
- b. For audit purposes, document in the comments each evidence type; UIB or “DUA related to Hurricane Helene”.

B. Non-MAGI (SSI Methodology) Budgeting

- 1. UIB type, State Unemployment Insurance Benefits, is a **countable** source of income for all Medicaid eligibility determinations. Refer to policy [MA-2250 Income](#).
- 2. For Non-MAGI (SSI Methodology) Budgeting, Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA) is **excluded** from countable income.
- 3. NC FAST Instructions
For an applicant/beneficiary being evaluated under a non-MAGI eligibility group and receiving Disaster Unemployment Assistance:
 - a. The caseworker will need to choose the benefit evidence type Unemployment Pandemic Insurance, and
 - b. For audit purposes, document under income details “DUA related to Hurricane Helene”.

<u>Income Code & Type</u>	Countable for MAGI Budgeted Programs	Countable for Non-MAGI Budgeted Programs
0-State Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UI)	Yes	Yes
1-Extended (EB)	Yes	Yes
Increased Benefit Amount (IBA) <i>No # code – ‘Regular UIB’</i>	Yes	Yes
Disaster Unemployment Assistance (DUA)	Yes	No

III. IMPLEMENTATION

The policy and procedures in this administrative letter are effective immediately for all applications, recertifications, and changes in circumstance including those currently in progress for ongoing and retroactive eligibility periods.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact your [Medicaid Operational Support Team representative](#).

DocuSigned by:



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Jay Ludlam

Deputy Secretary, NC Medicaid