

DHB ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO: 06-24, HURRICANE HELENE – GUIDANCE FOR MEDICAID APPLICATIONS IN DISASTER COUNTIES - AMENDED

DATE: October 31, 2024

SUBJECT: Hurricane Helene – Guidance for Medicaid Applications in Disaster Counties - Amended

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 counties listed below as a result of the impact of Hurricane Helene:

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

The purpose of this letter is to provide additional guidance and clarification for counties assisting one of the above-named counties, as well as guidance for counties who receive courtesy applications from individuals who are temporarily displaced from one of these counties.

The Division of Health Benefits (DHB) is also reminding local agencies to review DHB Administrative Letter 05-24 – Amended, and the recently **updated** Dear County Director letter, dated October 31, 2024, regarding Hurricane Helene flexibilities, and guidance.

DHB is amending this Administrative Letter to include the date that the flexibilities noted below end. The guidance for processing applications for those counties impacted by the disaster is effective through December 31, 2024.

II. POLICY REMINDERS

A. Documentation

Caseworkers who are processing applications for one of the above-named counties **must** document thoroughly in NC FAST. Documentation must include the following information, at minimum, and as applicable to the application. Caseworkers must update documentation in NC FAST whenever taking any action. (i.e., the caseworker in the processing county requested verification of citizenship, no response was received from the first DHB-5097, Request for Information, and on the 13th day after the first DHB-5097 the caseworker sends a second DHB-5097. The caseworker must document both at the time they occur.)

1. The application is being processed by (processing county name) for (administrative county name) due to Hurricane Helene.
2. The application is/is not a courtesy application.
3. Verifications provided by the applicant (when applicable) and details of self-attestations.

B. Uploading to NC FAST

Caseworkers must upload all information provided by the applicant/beneficiary to the appropriate person page or case in NC FAST.

C. Addresses

1. Caseworkers must ensure that the applicant's primary address is entered correctly.
2. For temporarily displaced applicants, caseworkers should include a mailing address as well so that individuals receive the appropriate notices and Medicaid card (when applicable).

D. Managed care

1. Standard plans and tailored plans should continue to be assigned based on the individual's primary residence.

2. Temporarily displaced individuals will have access to medical professionals in the area where they are temporarily residing.

E. O&M Report

1. Counties who are volunteering to assist other counties should use the O&M application reports found in NC FAST to identify pending applications for the county they have been assigned to partner with.
 - a. Non-MAGI applications: Traditional MA and MAD Pending Apps by Worker Detail
 - b. MAGI applications: MAGI Pending Apps by Worker Detail
2. Caseworkers should identify an application and confirm that the application has not been reassigned to another county caseworker.
3. After selecting the application, the caseworker must reassign the pending application to themselves.
4. The O&M report will update the following business day with the current county and worker processing the application.

III. SPECIAL POLICY AND PROCEDURES

A. Courtesy Applications

Due to the extensive destruction caused by Hurricane Helene, many individuals have been temporarily displaced and may be residing in another county.

1. When an individual submits a Medicaid application to a county other than where their permanent residence is, the receiving county must accept the application as a courtesy application.
2. Until further notice, courtesy applications received for the counties named above should be **processed** by the county which accepted the application.
3. Applications for individuals who live in the counties listed above should be processed using the flexibilities noted in [DHB Administrative Letter 05-24](#).
4. After processing the application, approved cases should be transferred to the appropriate administrative county, based on the individual's primary residence.
 - a. Insurance Affordability cases (IAC) must be transferred by the caseworker to the appropriate county. Refer to NC FAST Job Aid Completing a County Transfer for instructions.

- b. Income Support cases (ISC) should also be transferred to the appropriate county by the caseworker who processed the application. Refer to NC FAST Job Aid Completing a County Transfer for instructions.
5. Caseworkers must ensure that the correct physical address is entered in NC FAST so that the correct administrative county will be identified by NC FAST.
6. For individuals who are temporarily displaced from their home, a mailing address must also be entered so that the individual receives their Medicaid card and other related information in a timely manner.

B. Pending Applications

1. Using the O&M pending apps reports (refer to II.D., above), select a pending application for the county that has been assigned.
2. Applications should be selected based on the application date, beginning with the oldest applications.
3. Reassign the application in NC FAST to the appropriate caseworker in the processing county.
4. Document the assignment in NC FAST (refer to II.A., above).
5. Refer to DHB Administrative Letter 05-24 for special flexibilities related to applications pending for applicants who reside in the above-named counties.
6. If additional information is required, follow policy found in MA-XXXX, to request the information.
 - a. It is suggested that the caseworker attempt to contact the applicant or their authorized representative by telephone to obtain self-attestation statements when applicable.
 - b. If the caseworker is unable to contact the applicant or their authorized representative by telephone, send a DHB-5097 and allow 12 calendar days for the applicant to provide the information. Send a second DHB-5097 on day 13 if needed.
 - c. Do **not** request information that has been attested to by the applicant (other than citizenship or immigration status).
7. Process the application according to the applicable policy and flexibilities allowed in DHB Administrative Letter 05-24.
8. Transfer the approved and activated case to the administrative county (refer to III.A.4., above).

C. ePASS Applications and FFM Applications

1. Assisting counties should process ePASS applications following the guidance for pending applications in III.B., above.
2. When an assisting county is processing an FFM application, some household members may already be determined eligible while others are awaiting caseworker action. Refer to NC FAST Job Aid: FFM Determination Processing for instructions.

D. Changes of Circumstances

1. If a beneficiary who lives in one of the above-named counties reports a change in circumstances, evaluate to determine the impact of the change.
2. If the change results in eligibility for a greater benefit, the county who receives the reported change should react to the change according to the applicable policy.
3. If the reported change results in a decrease or termination of benefits, document the change but do **not** take any further action. Benefits for beneficiaries in the impacted counties should not be reduced or terminated, except for the following:
 - The beneficiary moves out of state
 - The beneficiary voluntarily requests termination of Medicaid benefits
 - Death of the beneficiary

IV. ASSISTING COUNTY ASSIGNMENTS

A. County Assignment Chart

DHB has worked with counties who have volunteered to assist counties impacted in the Hurricane Helene Disaster Declaration. The chart below indicates the counties assisting and which disaster county they have been assigned to work with.

| Disaster County | Assisting County |
|-----------------|---|
| Avery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rowan • Stokes • Washington |
| Buncombe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Hanover • Durham • Harnett • Chatham |
| Haywood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cherokee • Mecklenburg |
| Madison | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surry • Carteret |
| McDowell | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guilford • Iredell • Franklin |
| Mitchell | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green • Union • Martin |
| Yancey | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catawba • Stanly • Anson |

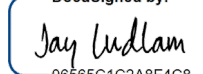
B. Tips and Best Practices

1. DHB recommends that assisting counties appoint one or more points of contact staff to work with other assisting counties.
2. Communication between assisting counties and disaster counties is required to make this process as smooth as possible.
3. DHB suggests that each assisting county assigned to a disaster county communicate with each other and develop a plan to efficiently and effectively process pending applications for their assigned disaster county.

V. IMPLEMENTATION

Policy and procedures included in this DHB Administrative Letter are effective upon receipt **and continue through December 31, 2024**, for all new and pending applications for applicants living in the counties impacted by the Hurricane Helene Disaster Declaration (refer to I., above).

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