

DHHS Support due to Hurricane Dorian

Sept. 6, 2019

To NC Medicaid Stakeholders:

The Department of Health and Human Services is committed to ensuring beneficiaries and health care professionals can continue receiving and providing services during Hurricane Dorian. On Sept. 4, 2019, the Department received federal authority to make temporary changes to some Medicaid services and processes that will make it easier for beneficiaries to get the services they need.

Below are highlights of the temporary flexibilities and other special procedures in place now due to Hurricane Dorian. IMPORTANT: Please read the Sept. 5, 2019, [Medicaid Special Bulletin](#) for details about effective dates, re-evaluation timing, provisions and processes.

- **Reimbursement for medically necessary services.** NC Medicaid will reimburse providers for medically necessary drugs and services, and equipment and supplies, provided during the Hurricane Dorian emergency without prior approval from Sept. 4-11, 2019.
- **NC Health Choice flexibilities.** NC Health Choice flexibilities are temporarily added to several key policies and procedures through Nov. 3, 2019.
- **Innovations waiver flexibilities.** Approved Innovations waiver flexibilities includes temporarily exceeding certain time and benefit limits; postponement or relaxation of timing for annual reassessments, service plan approvals and face-to-face meetings; and no prior approval for services provided out-of-state. Please note: Innovations waiver flexibilities have specific uses and circumstances, and are time limited. Please refer to the Medicaid Special Bulletin for details.
- **Behavioral health services are available.** Anyone in need of or receiving behavioral health care who are uninsured or are a Medicaid beneficiary can access care by calling their regional behavioral health [Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization](#) (LME/MCO). They can also call the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#) at 1-800-985-5990. It is available year-round, 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to natural or human-caused disasters.
- **CAP/C and CAP/DA emergency and disaster plan activation.** Preparation steps, coordination and reporting for case management entities to serve CAP/C and CAP/DA beneficiaries.
- **Medication prior approval and prescription refills.** Pharmacy providers are approved to override prior approval requirements and to early fill medications effective Sept. 3, during the Governor's state of emergency order.
- **Medications for HIV shipped early.** Walgreens shipped medications for HIV early to patients living in coastal communities. They are also authorized to fill emergency prescriptions.
- **Medication assisted treatment is available.** Individuals receiving medication assisted treatment from an opioid treatment program may take home additional doses for treatment or receive guest-dosing at another licensed opioid treatment program. Other locations can be found in the [Central Registry](#).
- **Shelters have naloxone.** Naloxone for opioid-related overdose was sent to shelters today.

- **Shelter for medically fragile patients is open.** A 50-bed State Medical Support Shelter (SMSS) for medically fragile patients is now open in Clayton. Individuals who need active monitoring, management or intervention from a medical professional to maintain their health must contact their county emergency management office to request placement in the SMSS.
- **Shelters are accessible and supportive of those with behavioral illnesses or intellectual and developmental disabilities.** DHHS is working with its partners so that shelters have, for example, calming rooms to support individuals with autism or other disabilities, when a congregant setting may not be conducive for their wellbeing.
- **Food benefits will be available early for WIC participants.** In addition, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children ([WIC](#)) participants in storm-affected counties who were scheduled to receive their benefits should have had those benefits automatically added to their eWIC card by their local WIC agency. WIC participants can confirm that benefits have been added by calling the eWIC customer service line at 844-230-0813 or by accessing their account at www.mybnft.com. This automatic renewal will continue through the weekend in storm-affected counties.
- **Critical access hospital bed limits.** The limit of 25 beds is lifted Sept. 4-11, 2019.
- **Nursing home admissions.** Temporary PASSR procedures are not required for new admissions for 30 days, and transfers between nursing facilities due to Hurricane Dorian will not require a PASSR. Also, from Sept. 4-11, 2019, the 3-day qualifying hospital stay requirement is waived for beneficiaries who requires a short-term stay in a nursing facility due to Hurricane Dorian.
- **Health care professionals not enrolled as an NC Medicaid provider.** Providers not enrolled in NC Medicaid can apply to temporarily provide service to Medicaid beneficiaries through an expedited process.
- **Personal care services.** Assessments scheduled Sept. 4-6 in certain counties have been cancelled. A list of counties is available in the Medicaid Special Bulletin. An expedited assessment process may be available for evacuees placed in an Adult Care Home by DSS due to shelter needs.
- **Durable medical equipment replacement.** Documentation that will be accepted for equipment loss or damage due to Hurricane Dorian.

The Department is in the process of:

- Recruiting volunteer teams of Environmental Health Specialists (EHSs) to come into storm-impacted counties to conduct inspections of restaurants, other food establishments, private septic systems and private drinking wells so that they can quickly return to normal operations.
- Securing assistive technology devices and equipment to help individuals who are displaced due to the storm or who have devices or equipment that is destroyed or lost.

Updates will be shared as they become available. In addition to messages like this one, information will be delivered through Medicaid Hurricane Dorian webpage posts, future Medicaid Special Bulletins on the Medicaid website, NCTracks Provider Portal posts and NCTracks Alert emails.

Resources

[Special Medicaid Bulletin – Sept. 5, 2019](#)

[Medicaid Hurricane Dorian web page](#)

[DHHS Hurricane Dorian web page](#)

[NC Governor Roy Cooper's Executive Order 101](#)

[Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services letter of authorization under Section 1135](#)

Dave Richard

Deputy Secretary

NC Medicaid

Division of Health Benefits

[NC Department of Health and Human Services](#)

Office: 919-855-4101

Mobile: 919-500-1596

dave.richard@dhhs.nc.gov

1985 Umstead Drive, Kirby Building

2501 Mail Service Center

Raleigh, NC 27699-2501