

Hurricane Florence Recovery Continues

Dateline: November 29, 2018

Hurricane Florence barreled down on North Carolina through most of the week of September 10th, 2018. That seems like a long time ago, but the recovery process is ongoing. The impact—both service and cost related—is difficult to tally for the BH/IDD public system, partly because the costs can continue for several months after the actual hurricane.

The General Assembly held two special sessions in October and one in November to allocate funding where it was most needed. NC DHHS was allocated an additional \$12 million during the legislative special session on October 15, 2018. Legislators also created the Hurricane Florence Disaster Recovery Fund with \$850 million. Almost half of that was allocated, including the \$12 million to NC DHHS. Many of those funds were allocated to public safety, public instruction and agricultural relief. The General Assembly also allocated almost \$300 million in November, the majority of that going to agricultural relief and public instruction. LME/MCOs have submitted costs to the State, not just the cost to LME/MCOs but the costs to providers as well. Eastpointe LME/MCO alone, perhaps with the hardest hit counties, has submitted costs of over \$800,000.

FEMA lists on their website that the total Individual & Households Program Dollars Approved for North Carolina were \$115,075,754.70. In fact, FEMA granted money to North Carolina for crisis counselors and community outreach. That funding has already been allocated to those LME/MCOs with the counties qualifying for disaster relief.

The recovery assistance continues and may be needed as far out as six months after the hurricane. Joy Futrell, Vice President of Business Operations for Trillium Health Resources LME/MCO, stated that their past experience with hurricanes shows that higher service and funding needs continue up to six months after the hurricane has hit. John Nash, Executive Director of The Arc of NC, estimates that their service sites in affected areas sustained approximately \$330,000 in damage

with insurance reimbursing all but one-fifth of that cost. John stated, “We won't know for a while the impact of lost services and revenue, as well as expenses for paying DSPs [Direct Support Professionals] and staff in impacted areas. I am very concerned for them and the impact to people's livelihood. We did send out a note to anyone impacted that we would try and keep them on regular wages while things were being sorted out in the short term – not sure what that number is yet though.” At a statewide meeting, many statewide provider association representatives talked about office spaces being condemned or no longer suitable for service delivery and the additional staff time needed to track and continue working with consumers who were evacuated.

NC DHHS was among many State agencies that were working hard to prepare for the impact of the Hurricane, not just on the land itself, but also on the people. Originally 18 counties in North Carolina were designated the hardest hit by the storm and, therefore, qualified for waivers of policies, expedited processing of applications and additional supports in Medicaid and Health Choice during and directly after the hurricane. There continues to be some flexibility allowed to assist Medicaid beneficiaries in the Innovations Waiver through December 29, 2018 on a case-by-case basis. According to Dave Richard, NC DHHS Deputy Secretary for Medicaid, 20% of the citizens in the counties most impacted by Hurricane Florence are Medicaid and Health Choice beneficiaries. NC DHHS developed a [website](#) for individuals and agencies to know what waivers, expedited processes and supports had been granted. Essentially all of those waivers wrapped up on October 5, 2018.

49 counties were ultimately given status to apply for FEMA funding: Alamance, Alleghany, Anson, Ashe, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Brunswick, Cabarrus, Carteret, Chatham, Columbus, Craven, Cumberland, Dare, Davidson, Duplin, Granville, Greene, Harnett, Hoke, Hyde, Johnston, Jones, Lee, Lenoir, Madison, Montgomery, Moore, New Hanover, Onslow, Orange, Pamlico, Pender, Person, Pitt, Polk, Randolph, Richmond, Robeson, Rowan, Sampson, Scotland, Stanly, Tyrrell, Union, Wayne, Wilson and Yancey.

S. 3, from October special session:

<https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017E3/Bills/Senate/PDF/S3v4.pdf>

H. 4, from October special session:

<https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017E3/Bills/House/PDF/H4v4.pdf>

S. 823, from November special session:

<https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/Senate/PDF/S823v1.pdf>