

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES  
Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services  
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## CMS NEWS

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### **In Response to Hurricane Ida Public Health Emergency, CMS Announces Support for Residents of Louisiana and Mississippi**

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) is announcing flexibilities being provided to ensure health care access continues for residents in Louisiana and Mississippi impacted by Hurricane Ida. On August 30, 2021, Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier [Becerra declared Public Health Emergencies \(PHEs\)](#) for Louisiana and Mississippi. With these PHEs in effect CMS is also notifying Louisiana and Mississippi of the resources and waivers being made available to ensure hospitals and other facilities can continue to operate and provide access to care to those impacted by Hurricane Ida. Many of these waivers were already in place as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 PHE.

“My heart is with the people of Louisiana, Mississippi and the Gulf Coast who are facing the devastation brought about by Hurricane Ida,” said Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Administrator Chiquita Brooks-LaSure. “With this administrative relief, we are acting to ensure people do not have a lapse in health coverage or lack access to the critical care they need. We are working closely with our federal, state, and local partners to provide access to health care and crucial life-saving and sustaining services when it matters most.”

Below are key measures and resources for those affected and actions CMS is taking in response to the Hurricane Ida PHEs declared in Louisiana and Mississippi:

**Current COVID-19 Waivers:** CMS has compiled a list of current waivers already available for health care providers to use during the COVID-19 PHE. These waivers remain available to providers in the States of Louisiana and Mississippi who have been affected by Hurricane Ida. The New 1135 Emergency Waiver and Public Health Emergency (PHE)-related Inquiries Web Tool launched on the CMS Waiver and Flexibilities. This webpage and can be found here: <https://www.cms.gov/about-cms/emergency-preparedness-response-operations/current-emergencies/coronavirus-waivers>.

**Disaster Toolkit and Support for State Medicaid and CHIP Agencies:** To prepare for current and future disasters, CMS has developed an inventory of Medicaid and CHIP flexibilities and authorities available to states in the event of a disaster to support Medicaid and CHIP operations and ensure continuity of coverage for people on Medicaid and CHIP during times of crisis. CMS also has developed a disaster preparedness toolkit for state Medicaid agencies that contains a detailed list of available strategies that states may temporarily utilize during a PHE, including streamlining provider enrollment requirements, delaying renewal processing for individuals in affected areas, and suspending fee-for-service and managed care prior authorization requirements. CMS encourages state Medicaid and CHIP agencies in Mississippi and Louisiana to reference this inventory and toolkit. For more information and to access the inventory and toolkit, visit: <https://www.medicaid.gov/state-resource-center/disaster-response-toolkit/index.html>.

**Dialysis Care:** CMS is helping people obtain and maintain access to critical life-saving services by activating the Kidney Community Emergency Response (KCER) program and working with the End Stage Renal Disease (ESRD) Networks located in Louisiana and Mississippi to assess the status of dialysis facilities in the potentially impacted areas. This includes assessing impacts related to generators, alternate water supplies, education and providing materials for patients, and more. They are also assisting people who evacuated ahead of the storm to receive dialysis services in the location to which they evacuated. CMS has also advised people to keep an emergency supply kit on hand in water proof bag, including important personal, medical, and insurance information; contact information for their facility; the ESRD NW hotline number; and contact information of those with whom they may stay or for out-of-state contacts. They have also been instructed to have on hand supplies to follow a three-day emergency diet. The ESRD NW13 (Louisiana) toll-free hotline is 800-472-8664; ESRD NW 8 (Mississippi) toll-free hotline is 877-936-9260; and the KCER hotline is 866-901-3773. Additional information is available on the KCER website [www.kcercoalition.com](http://www.kcercoalition.com).

**Medical Equipment and Supplies Replacements:** CMS will temporarily waive certain requirements to enable people with Medicare who have lost or realized damage to their durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies as a result of the hurricane to receive replacements of such items and services. This will help to ensure beneficiaries can continue to access the needed medical equipment and supplies they rely on each day. Medicare beneficiaries can contact **1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227)** for assistance.

**Suspension of Enforcement Activities:** CMS will temporarily suspend current survey and enforcement activities for healthcare facilities in Louisiana and Mississippi but will continue to investigate allegations of immediate threat to patient health and safety.

**Ensuring Access to Care in Medicare Advantage and Part D:** During a PHE, Medicare Advantage Organizations and Part D Plan sponsors must take steps to maintain access to covered benefits for beneficiaries in affected areas. These steps include allowing Part A/B and supplemental Part C plan benefits to be furnished at non-contracted facilities and waiving, in full, requirements for gatekeeper referrals where applicable.

**Emergency Preparedness Requirements and Provider Expectations:** CMS has provided specific Emergency Preparedness information to Medicare providers and suppliers through meetings, dialogue and presentations, since November 2017.

CMS has a variety of resources available to providers and suppliers available at <https://www.cms.gov/Medicare/Provider-Enrollment-and-Certification/SurveyCertEmergPrep/Emergency-Prep-Rule>.

CMS will continue to work with all geographic areas impacted by Hurricane Ida. We encourage beneficiaries and providers of healthcare services that have been impacted to seek help by visiting CMS's emergency webpage ([www.cms.gov/emergency](http://www.cms.gov/emergency)).

To find additional hurricane preparedness and response resources for the health sector and the latest regarding HHS activities for Hurricane Ida, please visit: <https://www.phe.gov/emergency/events/2021-hurricane/Pages/default.aspx>.

For more information about the Department of Health and Human Services' PHE, please visit: <https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2021/08/30/hhs-secretary-becerra-declares-public-health-emergencies-states-louisiana-and-mississippi-due-to-hurricane-ida.html>

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