

**DATE:** October 01, 2018

**TO:** Subscribers

**SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION:** Commissioners, TA Directors, SNAP Directors,  
WMS Coordinators, Medicaid Directors

**FROM:** Jeffrey Gaskell, Assistant Deputy Commissioner  
Employment and Income Support Programs

**SUBJECT:** Treatment of Hurricane Florence Evacuees Applying for Temporary  
Assistance (TA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and  
Medicaid

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** Immediately

**CONTACT PERSON:** SNAP Questions – SNAP Bureau (518) 473-1469  
TA Questions – Temporary Assistance Bureau (518) 474-9344  
Medicaid Questions - Local District Liaison:  
Upstate (518) 474-8887; New York City (212) 417-4500

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this GIS is to provide guidance to social services districts (districts) on meeting the needs of individuals and families who apply for emergency and recurring assistance [Family Assistance (FA) and Safety Net Assistance (SNA)], SNAP, or Medicaid who identify themselves as evacuees of Hurricane Florence. Districts should also provide referrals to other community resources as helpful to support the individual or family's temporary or longer-term resettlement in New York State.

### **Temporary Assistance (TA)**

Each individual or family displaced as a result of Hurricane Florence will present with different needs, possibly including the need for special accommodations, and must be handled accordingly. There are certain requirements that districts must adhere to in processing TA applications for displaced individuals and families including the following:

- Each applicant for emergency and recurring TA must complete a "Common Application" ([LDSS-2921](#)), have a face-to-face interview, and the district must register the application.
- Many displaced individuals and families will not have documentation with them and may not be able to secure documentation for some time. At first, self-declarations and collateral sources (e.g., attestations from family and friends) may be the only verification available and must be used to satisfy documentation requirements, category of assistance, identity, income, resources, citizenship status, relationship, etc. The provision of recurring benefits must not be delayed pending actual verification/documentation of required items. At a later date, some of this documentation may become available from other states or from individuals and families themselves. The delay or inability to meet the documentation requirements at application must not interfere with providing displaced persons with needed ongoing assistance.

- When the application is registered, the Social Security Enumeration process may be helpful to districts in establishing identity.
- Displaced families and individuals that are in an emergency situation may be eligible for emergency assistance including that needed to help establish a home.
- For persons with income, (e.g., Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Administration (SSA), Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB) or child support) who may not qualify for recurring SNA, immediate needs may be met under emergency SNA in accordance with 18 NYCRR 370.3 because the emergency is related to a catastrophe and the 125% gross income test does not apply.
- Districts must not consider, as income or resources, any TA benefits received in the home state of displaced persons prior to their resettlement in New York.
- Districts must establish a standard of need for each applying individual or family based on his/her actual circumstances. For example, for those displaced individuals housed in settings where they are not able to prepare meals or where meals are not provided in their residence, the district must determine if a restaurant allowance is appropriate.
- Income that is received, such as Social Security Benefits, must be budgeted using normal budgeting procedures. Initially displaced individuals and families may not have access to this income but they may begin to receive it at a later date. Applicants who were receiving these benefits or who may be eligible for them should be directed to contact the local SSA for help in reinstating or applying for this source of income.
- Verification from other states as to whether or not a family has received 60 months of TANF funded benefits may also be unavailable for some time. Districts should ask families how long they have received TANF funded benefits and use this information in determining category of assistance, at least until documentation is available.

### **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

#### **I. Treatment of SNAP Applications of Evacuees Affected by Hurricane Florence**

- Evacuees from states affected by Hurricane Florence should be treated the same as any other SNAP applicant.
- While regular SNAP eligibility and application processing rules apply to Hurricane Florence evacuee households, districts are reminded that evacuee households residing with another household can be treated as separate households even though the households may currently be purchasing and preparing food together.
- USDA also advises and encourages the assignment of certification periods commensurate with the evacuee household's intentions to return or not to return to their prior residence. In other words, longer certification periods commensurate with regular SNAP certification period assignment rules may be given to evacuee households that do not intend to return to their prior residence or do not know when or if they will return. Shorter certification periods (two or three months, for example) should be given to evacuee households who intend to return to their prior residence as soon as possible.
- Many displaced individuals and families will not have documentation with them and may not be able to secure documentation for some time. Self-declarations and collateral sources (e.g., attestations from family and friends) may be the only verification available and may be used to satisfy documentation requirements. The provision of recurring benefits must not be delayed pending actual verification/documentation of required items. Some documentation may become available to the household at a later date. Households should be encouraged to provide verification as it becomes available.

- Districts are reminded that, for SNAP, identity may be established through the SSN validation process in accordance with Section 2.III.E.1 of [12-INF-06](#).

If USDA provides further instructions on the handling of SNAP applications for Hurricane Florence evacuees, a separate GIS will be issued. In the meantime, if a district has any questions pertaining to the handling of the SNAP applications of evacuees, please contact your SNAP Bureau district liaison.

### **Medicaid**

Individuals displaced because of Hurricane Florence may have relocated to New York because they have family, friends or other support networks in the State. These individuals may not know how long they will remain in New York. Districts are reminded that, like TA and SNAP, there is no durational requirement for an individual to establish residency in the State. If an individual applying for Medicaid expresses an intent to stay in New York for an unknown period of time, the individual is considered to be a New York State resident. Although applicants are required to provide proof of residence, hurricane evacuees may not have documentation with their name and a New York State address. As a reminder, other documentation, such as a statement from the person they are living with, can be used to verify residency.

Hurricane evacuees may also no longer have income because of their displacement. An individual from one of the affected areas may attest to no longer having income, even if there is a wage match on the Resource File Integration (RFI). In such cases, the individual should provide a statement attesting to no income due to his or her displacement. The statement must be kept in the case record. Districts are reminded that disaster relief payments, such as those from FEMA, are not considered in determining Medicaid eligibility.

Districts must continue to obtain as much information as possible from Hurricane Florence evacuees who are applying for Medicaid. As with any Medicaid application, if an applicant advises the district that she/he is having difficulty in obtaining any necessary documentation, the district must assist the applicant. Please direct any questions to your district Medicaid liaison.

### **Systems Implications**

#### **Upstate WMS**

For TA cases (case types 11, 12, 16, 17, 18 and 19) each individual evacuee must be identified by entering Code "J" in the current field labeled "FAP CD" on WMS Screen 3. The field on screen 3 of the LDSS-3209 is currently unlabeled and is located between the fields labeled "CAT CD" and "EMP CD".

Additionally, for assistance authorized for "J" coded evacuees, each payment line written on Screen 6 (or Screen 9 for childcare payments) of the LDSS 3209 must have Special Claim Code "J" entered on the pay line in the "SPC CLM" field. This coding must also be used when authorizing Diversion Payments on MA and FS cases and on PA Denial situations.

If a pay line has a "J" Special Claim Code present, at least one case member must have a "J" in the FAP Indicator field on WMS Screen 3. Failure to meet this requirement will generate Error #1619: "SPC CLM CD J REQUIRES AT LEAST ONE FAP CODE J".

**Note:** The "J" Special Claim Code is being reactivated and will be available in both WMS and myWorkspace starting on 10/1/2018.

### **NYC WMS**

NYC has created a case level and line level opening code which should be used to open the cases of evacuees from Hurricane Florence. Codes: Y74 Eligible as a result of Hurricane Florence, is valid on TA case types 11,12,16,17, 18, and 19. The aforementioned code will allow workers to open households, as well as add individuals to existing cases.