

## Massachusetts Hurricane Recovery Resources for Evacuees

The Commonwealth has coordinated efforts across the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, the Executive Office of Education, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, and other secretariats and agencies to support evacuees. In addition, we are working closely with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to identify all disaster assistance programs and resources available through the federal government.

The following is a brief summary of the various resources and pathways to support available to evacuees through multiple agencies and programs:

### Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA)

- MA 2-1-1, which is operated by the United Way and has a contract with the state, has been designated as the single point of intake in the Commonwealth for evacuees and their families. Upon receiving a call, 2-1-1 conducts an intake and immediate needs assessment, and if the evacuee may need services or support, he or she is referred to a Family Resource Center in the region of the state in which the evacuee intends to reside. A listing of Family Resource Center locations and contact information can be found at (<https://www.frcma.org/locations>).
- If evacuees with emergency needs come to the attention of MA 2-1-1 or other organizations during non-business hours, the Red Cross will provide funds for hotel rooms and other items such as food and clothing until the next business day when the evacuee(s) will be referred by 2-1-1 to a Family Resource Center. The Red Cross is being reimbursed for its costs through a grant to MEMA from the Massachusetts United for Puerto Rico Fund.

### Family Resource Centers

- The Commonwealth's 22 Family Resource Centers (FRC) are helping evacuees register with FEMA for disaster benefits and providing critical case management support to individuals and families impacted by Hurricane Maria.
- These Family Resource Centers are:
  - ✓ Connecting individuals with career centers and helping individuals who are looking for employment
  - ✓ Helping individuals and families apply for Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and MassHealth benefits if eligible
  - ✓ Connecting families and individuals to local non-profit organizations who may be able to provide donated goods and other resources to meet urgent needs
  - ✓ Collaborating with federal, state and local partners, including regional housing agencies (HCEC's) and regional Community Action Programs (CAP agencies), to

- provide support to evacuees living with host families and to access federal, local and private temporary shelter options if needed
- ✓ Providing guidance from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education about enrolling children in school
  - For a full list of services being provided by the FRCs please visit the website at <https://www.frcma.org/content/services>.

### **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Resources and Programs**

Individuals who have evacuated from Puerto Rico should immediately apply for Individual Assistance from FEMA. The following provides brief descriptions of several of FEMA's disaster assistance programs that eligible Hurricane Maria disaster survivors from Puerto Rico may be able to access. This document does not detail all FEMA disaster assistance programs. All disaster survivors must apply directly to FEMA for benefits through **disasterassistance.gov** or **(800) 621-3362** or **TTY: (800) 462-7585**. FEMA will coordinate directly with the applicant to determine eligibility of the applicant/household for the various programs.

- **Transitional Shelter Assistance (TSA) Program** – FEMA and Puerto Rico have activated the TSA program for eligible applicants through January 13, 2018. TSA is a hotel voucher program that provides eligible disaster survivors with short term housing at hotels that are under contract with FEMA to provide rooms to disaster survivors. Currently, FEMA has approved TSA for eligible applicants for an initial period of 75 days with plans to conduct a 30-day mid-term assessment. FEMA may extend TSA benefits beyond 75 days based on FEMA reassessment and approval. Please note: TSA will be available to all eligible applicants. Since this program was activated on October 31<sup>st</sup>, individuals who have already registered for FEMA assistance prior to that date should reach out to FEMA to obtain information on the program and verify eligibility. Eligible survivors can find the list of TSA-approved hotels on [www.disasterassistance.gov](http://www.disasterassistance.gov), and click on the [Transitional Sheltering Assistance \(TSA\) Program – Participating Hotel List](#) link.
- **Individuals and Households Program (IHP)** - There are two components to the IHP Program: a.) Housing and b.) Other Needs Assistance (ONA). The maximum total benefit across both programs that an individual or household can receive for Puerto Rico's presidential disaster declaration is \$33,300.
  - A.) **Housing Assistance** - Provides funding to eligible households up to the program maximum for necessary housing-related expenses and other significant needs that cannot be met through other means, including temporary housing (see below for more details), repair or replacement of existing home, and/or semi-permanent or permanent housing construction. Please note: Housing Assistance benefits

generally are not made available to applicants until FEMA has verified damage to the primary dwelling by conducting a home inspection. In addition, applicants must have a representative onsite when the FEMA inspection is conducted (given the current volume of applicants, inspections are occurring approximately 30 - 45 days after a household has filed an application).

The temporary housing assistance programs are as follows:

✓ Lodging Expense Reimbursement (LER)

- Applicants who incur out-of-pocket temporary lodging expenses may be reimbursed for these expenses. Temporary lodging needs must be a direct result of the applicant's primary residence being rendered uninhabitable because of impacts from the presidentially-declared disaster.
- LER may be awarded from the start date of the incident, up to and not to exceed seven days from the approved date of any initial Rental Assistance award (see below for more detail on Rental Assistance).
- Home must be uninhabitable or inaccessible (requires inspection).
- Receiving temporary lodging for same dates through Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) or a similar organization is a duplication of benefit.

✓ Rental Assistance

- Provided to applicants to rent temporary housing when displaced from their primary residence as a result of a presidentially-declared disaster.
- Primary home must be uninhabitable or, inaccessible or, affected by utility outages or, unavailable due to forced relocation (i.e., property owner restricting access).
- While receiving Rental Assistance a Permanent Housing Plan will be developed for the applicant by FEMA.

✓ Continued Rental Assistance

- Provided based on need, and generally only when adequate, alternate housing is not available, or when the applicant's Permanent Housing Plan has not been fulfilled through no fault of the applicant.

**B.) Other Needs Assistance (ONA)** - Provides funding to eligible applicants for uninsured, underinsured, or disaster-related necessary expenses and serious needs, not housing related, that cannot be met through other means. Under this program, financial assistance may be provided for childcare, medical and dental expenses,

funeral and burial costs, transportation, and replacement of personal property depending upon eligibility requirements. Total benefit (including any benefits received under the housing component of IHP) cannot exceed the \$33,300 per household cap.

- ✓ Personal Property Assistance: To repair or replace essential household items including, but not limited to, furnishings and appliances, accessibility items defined within the Americans with Disabilities Act, and specialized tools and protective clothing required by an employer.
  - ✓ Transportation Assistance: To repair or replace a vehicle damaged by a disaster and other transportation-related costs.
  - ✓ Moving and Storage Assistance: To relocate and store personal property from the damaged primary residence to prevent further disaster damage, such as ongoing repairs, and returning the property to the primary residence.
  - ✓ Funeral Assistance: To assist with funeral expenses incurred as a direct result of a declared disaster, which may include reallocation or reburial of unearthed remains and replacement of burial vessels and markers.
  - ✓ Medical and Dental Assistance: To assist with medical or dental expenses caused by a disaster, which may include injury, illness, loss of prescribed medication and equipment, or insurance co-payments.
  - ✓ Child Care Assistance: A one-time payment, covering up to eight cumulative weeks of child care expenses, for a household's increased financial burden to care for children aged 13 and under; and/or children aged 14 to 18 with a disability as defined by federal law.
- Information for individuals who need help replacing important lost or damaged documents can be found at: <https://www.fema.gov/news-release/2017/10/24/4339/fact-sheet-after-maria-replacing-important-lost-or-damaged-documents>
  - More information about FEMA Assistance can be found at:  
English: <https://www.fema.gov/disaster/4294-4297/updates/fact-sheet-what-femas-individual-assistance-program>  
  
Spanish: <https://www.fema.gov/es/news-release/2017/10/24/4339/hoja-informativa-luego-de-maria-como-reemplazar-documentos-importantes-que>

## Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

- DHCD has issued guidance to local housing authorities reminding them that they may:
  - ✓ Extend the 21-day guest restriction contained in the lease
  - ✓ Choose to temporarily relax verification requirements if an existing tenant in state-aided housing requests to permanently add an additional member to their household (a parent or other relative, for example)
  - ✓ Relax the appropriate unit size standards for households adding a new member, so long as occupancy of the apartment does not violate the square footage requirements of the State Sanitary Code.
  - ✓ The entire guidance can be found at:  
<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/10/2017-23.pdf>
- Families and individuals impacted by Hurricane Maria who plan to permanently relocate to Massachusetts and meet eligibility criteria for state-aided public housing may receive Priority 1, displaced by natural forces eligibility. Upon meeting eligibility criteria, families will be added to the existing local housing authority waiting list, but will not be prioritized over other Priority 1 populations on the list.

## Executive Office of Education

- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education issued guidance about enrolling children in school who have lost their housing. This information has been provided to and is available at the Family Resource Centers.
- The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has held conference calls with school superintendents in 33 school districts where we expect the highest number of students from Puerto Rico to enroll.
- As part of a recently established data collection process, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will continue to track student evacuees from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands as they enroll in Massachusetts's public schools. Based on updated FTE enrollment numbers, the administration will propose supplemental appropriations for the remainder of FY18, to ensure that school districts can draw down additional state aid for these new students, as needed. This additional state aid will be consistent with their current per-pupil Chapter 70 funding levels, based on the profile of the student evacuees they serve, including their potential status as English Language Learners (ELL).
- We will continue to monitor these enrollment numbers through FY18 and beyond and seek additional aid for districts experiencing significant enrollment increases as necessary.

## Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)

- Where state and federal regulations allow, the Department is assisting clients in obtaining necessary verifications through collateral contact when documentary verifications are not readily available.
- Designated dedicated Central Office staff are monitoring cases and providing policy and procedural support to local office case managers.
- DTA has provided materials in English and Spanish to community partners and Family Resource Centers who are working with evacuees to identify necessary supports.
- DTA staff is working with Puerto Rican administrators to verify case status and accessibility.

## MassHealth

- A dedicated **customer service number 1-844-748-3928 (TTY: 1-800-497-4648** for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled) has been established for issues related to hurricane evacuees.
- Community organizations experiencing a high need for application or enrollment support can request support from MassHealth using the above number.
- Hurricane evacuees may use the Self-Attestation Form if they do not have documentation of income, residency or other information. MassHealth will utilize electronic data sources to attempt to verify information. Provisional eligibility information can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/13/SAF%20%2810-17%29-fillable.pdf>
- Specific information about enrolling individuals impacted by the hurricane in MassHealth can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/10/13/Communication%20for%20Hurricane%20Evacuee%20Applications-2017.10.13.pdf>.
- Events may take approximately a week to be set up to provide sufficient time for planning, staffing, computers, and interpreter capabilities.

## Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD)

- The One-Stop Career Centers in Massachusetts will assist individuals in accessing unemployment insurance (UI), job search, and questions on finding employment in Massachusetts. Please connect individuals impacted by Hurricane Maria through the One-Stop Career Centers statewide at: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/find-a-career-center-near-you>
- One-Stop Career Centers can assist in the following ways:
  - ✓ Applications for regular or disaster unemployment insurance benefits. Additional information can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/news/notice-to-puerto-rico-claimants> or via phone at **(877) 355-1135** to receive assistance
  - ✓ Job search, resume, and employment resources

- ✓ Career Centers can assist a person with information on how to apply for a professional license in MA through the various Boards of Registration overseen by the Massachusetts Division of Professional Licensure <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-professional-licensure>
- ✓ Connections to local, community-based resources and organizations to support job search and retraining, including adult education, veterans' employment counselors and beyond
- The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), the Department of Career Services (DCS), and the Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) are partnering across systems to support individuals impacted by the hurricanes. These Labor and Workforce Development agencies have taken proactive steps to make access to unemployment benefits and employment services as readily available as possible. The Workforce Boards and One-Stop Career Centers are working closely with each Family Resource Center (FRC) to best meet the needs of individuals and families in that region.
- EOLWD agencies hold weekly calls to provide updates from federal, state, local and non-profit organizations for all Workforce Boards and One-Stop Career Centers and to discuss how regional staff can best support the FRCs.
- EOLWD is preparing to issue a joint Workforce Communication Guidance to One-Stop Career Centers and Workforce Boards outlining the state's protocol for coordinating services for families/individuals and to communicate new data collection and training practices. The Guidance will provide information about accessing key resources for FEMA benefits, housing, and health and human service supports to the workforce system and its customers.
- In the cities with the highest volume of Hurricane evacuees, One-Stop Career Center staff have relocated and are working directly out of the local Family Resource Centers to make access to employment services as convenient and expeditious as possible. In cities such as Fall River, Holyoke, New Bedford, Springfield, and Worcester, staff are working at the FRCs, participating in orientations, and providing on site case management, access to Unemployment Insurance, job search services and connections to education or training.
- One-Stop Career Center staff are reaching out to businesses to recruit companies interested in hiring impacted individuals. For example, the Holyoke Career Center (CareerPoint) worked with the Chamber of Commerce in Holyoke to survey all of its business members. Ten companies have stepped forward to partner with the Career Center and match individuals from Puerto Rico with job openings.
- EOLWD is seeking additional federal funding through a National Dislocated Worker Grant to support new or refresher training for individuals from Puerto Rico.
- In order to facilitate employment opportunities in Massachusetts as quickly as possible, the Division of Professional Licensure (DPL), under the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, has identified licensure reciprocity requirements for its professional licenses. DPL licenses and regulates individuals and businesses in 167 trades and professions through its 39 boards of registration. The Career Centers will help coordinate those who wish to become licensed to practice in the Commonwealth, or applicants may access the boards of registration directly. License types and boards of registrations for the various occupations licensed by DPL can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-professional-licensure>. In addition, relocated

individuals experiencing financial hardship will be eligible to have their licensing fees waived and where applicable, application fees.

- EOLWD has staffed Spanish speaking agents at its MA UI call center to assist with UI filings and is working directly with the federal and Puerto Rican governments to help individuals navigate through the process and ensure access to regular and disaster UI benefits.

### Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV)

- The RMV has outlined options for obtaining/retaining personal identification and motor vehicle licensure for evacuees relocating to Massachusetts.
  - ✓ Individuals who are here temporarily may continue to use their active Puerto Rican license or identification (ID).
  - ✓ Individuals who plan to reside in the Commonwealth permanently and have a valid Puerto Rican license or ID may convert their license. The RMV requires a driving record less than 30 days old from the state the customer is coming from. Additional information and the required documents list can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/transfer-your-out-of-state-drivers-license-to-massachusetts> and <https://www.mass.gov/files/2017-08/Documents%20Requirement%20Chart.pdf>.
  - ✓ Individuals who plan to reside in the Commonwealth permanently and do NOT have a valid Puerto Rican license or ID should apply for a new license or ID. The customer would be required to take a permit test and a road test and to provide proof of date of birth, signature, and residency. Additional information and the required documents list can be found at: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/apply-for-a-passenger-class-d-learners-permit>; and [https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/22/Acceptable%20ID%20Documents\\_2.pdf](https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/22/Acceptable%20ID%20Documents_2.pdf)

### Recap of Key Contact Information

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- **MassHealth:** A dedicated **customer service number 1-844-748-3928 (TTY: 1-800-497-4648** for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled) has been established for issues related to hurricane evacuees.
- For elected officials or others (not seeking direct assistance) with general questions about the Commonwealth's overall hurricane evacuees support efforts, please email [MAHurricaneRecoveryResources@MassMail.State.MA.US](mailto:MAHurricaneRecoveryResources@MassMail.State.MA.US) or contact Rachel Madden, Undersecretary at the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, at **617-727-2040**.