



MassHealth Applications as a Result of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria

October 13, 2017

Introduction

On August 25, 2017 Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas. Approximately a week later Hurricane Irma hit several Caribbean islands including Puerto Rico before making landfall in Florida. Shortly thereafter, Puerto Rico was impacted by Hurricane Maria. Some individuals are evacuating and seeking out family and friends in Massachusetts.

Applicants who have evacuated from the storm-affected areas may have little documentation. MassHealth has developed processes to streamline the application process for hurricane evacuees. MassHealth has also established a dedicated customer service number to ensure that hurricane evacuees, enrollment assisters, and community organizations have expedited access to information and application assistance. This memo outlines policy clarifications and the process to assist impacted individuals who have relocated to Massachusetts and need to apply for MassHealth.

Information about other resources for hurricane evacuees in Massachusetts is available by dialing 2-1-1.

MassHealth Customer Service Support

Effective Friday, October 13, 2017, MassHealth has established 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), for issues related to hurricane evacuees. This customer service number should be used for assistance with submitting applications for hurricane evacuees, for questions about MassHealth coverage for hurricane evacuees, to obtain interpreter services for hurricane related applications and customer service, and to provide a central point of contact for community organizations working with hurricane evacuees and affected communities.

Community organizations experiencing a high need for application or enrollment support may use this number to request MassHealth assistance in the form of enrollment events at specified times and locations. Events may take approximately a week to be set up to provide sufficient time for planning, staffing, computers, and interpreter capabilities.

Application Process

Hurricane evacuees who intend to stay in Massachusetts can apply for MassHealth coverage through 3 different processes:

1. **Fill out a full MassHealth application** online, by phone, in person or mail a paper application. Individuals who have relocated to Massachusetts as a result of the recent hurricanes and need to apply for MassHealth should complete the Massachusetts Application for Health and Dental Coverage and Help Paying Costs (ACA-3). Individuals aged 65 or older, and those of any age who need long-term-care services (either in a nursing facility or in the community) will need to fill out the paper Application for Health Coverage for Seniors and People Needing Long-Term-Care Services (SACA-2).

Phone and online applications for applicants under age 65 are strongly encouraged because eligibility is determined real-time.

- **Apply online** at <https://www.mahealthconnector.org/>
- **Call** MassHealth Customer Service at 1-844-748-3928 (TTY: 1-800-497-4648 for people who are deaf, hard of hearing, or speech disabled) to apply by phone or to request an application. Interpreter services are available. **This number is to be used only for hurricane-related matters.**
- **Download a paper application** at <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/consumer/insurance/apply-for-health-coverage/>. Applications from people who have relocated to Massachusetts due to the hurricane will be expedited for processing. For paper applications, if the applicant or assister indicates "Hurricane Evacuee" on the first page, MassHealth will expedite processing of the application.

Applicants can get free, in-person help from a trained, certified enrollment assister, like a Navigator or Certified Application Counselor, who can answer questions and help fill out and submit applications. Applicants can find an assister using the Enrollment Assister Search web page at <https://www.mahealthconnector.org/help-center>.

2. **Hospital-determined Presumptive Eligibility (HPE)** Hospitals can use the existing HPE process to determine an individual presumptively eligible based on information the individual provides. Hospital-determined presumptive eligibility provides for coverage until the end of the month following the presumptive application approval (30-60 days), and the individual must complete a full application before the presumptive eligibility expires to avoid a gap in coverage.
3. **Individuals who apply for and receive cash assistance through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) are automatically eligible for MassHealth** while they are receiving assistance from DTA. Note that individuals who are only receiving SNAP benefits through DTA must apply separately for MassHealth.

If a hurricane evacuee has relocated to Massachusetts to join family who already has submitted a MassHealth application, additional family members may be added to an existing application. To add a member to an existing MassHealth application, the head of household or authorized

representative should call MassHealth Customer Service at 1-844-748-3928. Members who have an online account may also utilize self-service options to report changes or add additional family members to their case.

Eligibility Clarification

Hurricane evacuees applying for MassHealth benefits through either a full application or hospital-determined presumptive eligibility must meet all eligibility rules for MassHealth.

In order to be eligible for MassHealth, individuals must intend to reside in Massachusetts. However, there is no durational requirement for Massachusetts residency nor is an individual required to intend to live here permanently. See 130 CMR 503.002 or 517.002 for additional information.

Individuals cannot maintain residency in two states nor can they be on Medicaid in more than one state or territory. If individuals receive MassHealth coverage, they will be dis-enrolled from any other state's or territory's Medicaid coverage.

An applicant must answer the Massachusetts residency question on the application or HPE application. By checking "yes" to the residency question, the applicant is attesting he or she is living in Massachusetts with the intention to reside. If an evacuee wishes to maintain residency in his or her home state/territory, the individual must check "no" to the residency question on the application. A "no" answer will result in a MassHealth denial.

Individuals who wish to maintain residency in their home state/territory and wish to maintain Medicaid coverage in their home state/territory should inform health care providers of their existing coverage. Massachusetts is working to obtain information for health care providers to facilitate their seeking reimbursement from other states' or territories' Medicaid programs. In the interim, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) has published Frequently Asked Questions addressing related issues, available here: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Hurricane-FAQs-10102017.pdf>.

Verifications

Applicants who have fled storm-affected areas may have little or no documentation. MassHealth will utilize electronic data sources to attempt to verify information. If electronic data sources are unable to verify the application information, a Request for Information (RFI) notice will be sent. The individual may be eligible for provisional eligibility benefits for up to 90 days pending verification. If an individual receives a request for verification and is unable to provide such documentation due to the natural disaster, MassHealth will accept self-attestation for all eligibility criteria except citizenship and immigration status in accordance with 42 CFR 435.952(c)(3).

MassHealth has created the *Self-Attestation Form for Hurricane Evacuees Applying for MassHealth* which an applicant impacted by the hurricane can complete attesting to their circumstances if they do not have documentation of income, residency or other information. Upon receipt of the form, MassHealth will consider this self-attestation as verification of income, residency and other information attested on the application. This form can be submitted with a paper application, or in response to a Request for Information notice.

This form cannot be used to verify citizenship or immigration status. Federal rules require that citizenship or immigration status be verified. MassHealth will make every effort to verify citizenship or immigration status using federal data matches. If data matching is unable to provide verification, applicants are entitled to a 90-day “reasonable opportunity” period to provide citizenship or immigration status verification.

Individuals who use the hospital-determined presumptive eligibility (HPE) process do not need to verify eligibility criteria including citizenship or immigration status during the presumptive eligibility period. However, in order to keep their benefits, they must complete a full application by the end of the month following the presumptive application approval.

Attachment

- Self-Attestation Form for Hurricane Evacuees Applying for MassHealth

