



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

NELSON SMITH  
COMMISSIONER

DEPARTMENT OF  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

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## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Affected Stakeholders

**From:** Jae Benz, Director  
Office of Licensing

**Date:** October 2, 2024

**Re:** **Shout-Out to Licensed Providers as well as Hurricane Resources and Reminders**

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**Purpose:** To acknowledge the dedication of the provider community to effectively implement their emergency preparedness and response plans and communicate directly with the Office of Licensing regarding concerns during the most recent severe weather event. Additionally, to provide DBHDS licensed providers with helpful resources and information as we continue through the 2024 hurricane season.

**Summary:** Hurricane season lasts through November 30th. It is essential to plan and be prepared for a hurricane to ensure the safety of residents, participants, and employees and to minimize the damage that may be caused by severe weather.

A number of providers reached out to the Office of Licensing to share updates about their status, modifications to their service delivery or changes in their location as a result of damage caused by Hurricane Helene. This open dialogue ensured the Office of Licensing was able to quickly support changes and engage in productive and collaborative problem-solving with those providers. DBHDS would like to thank all of the providers who proactively communicated and implemented their emergency plans to ensure continuity of care for individuals receiving services.

DBHDS would like to share some tips/resources to help providers assess their readiness to respond to hurricanes and other related events that may require activation of an emergency preparedness plan.

If you have not already, now is the time to review your emergency preparedness and response plan as outlined in Licensing Regulation 12VAC35-105-530. The plan should include an analysis of potential emergencies that could disrupt the normal course of service delivery, such as hurricanes or other weather related events in addition to being prepared for other emergencies such as a public health crisis involving an infectious disease.

Please note a provider must review the emergency preparedness plan at least annually and make necessary revisions. Employees, contractors, students, and volunteers must be knowledgeable in and prepared to implement the emergency preparedness plan in the event of an emergency. The plan shall include a policy regarding regularly scheduled emergency preparedness training for all employees, contractors, students, and volunteers.

In the event of a disaster, fire, emergency, or any other condition that may jeopardize the health, safety, or welfare of individuals, the provider shall take appropriate action to protect the health, safety, and welfare of individuals receiving services and take appropriate actions to remedy the conditions as soon as possible. After the disaster or emergency is stabilized, the provider should report the disaster or emergency to the department, but no later than 24 hours after the incident occurs.

If there is a disruption of services or a need to re-locate services, please ensure you contact your licensing specialist and their manager either directly or through the CONNECT Portal so that we are aware and can support you as we are able.

Please take time now to evaluate your emergency supplies and remember that per Licensing Regulation 12VAC35-105-530.H., providers of residential services shall have at all times at least a three-day supply of emergency food and water for all residents and staff. Emergency food supplies should include foods that do not require cooking. Water supplies shall include one gallon of water per person per day.

**Resources:**

1. [Virginia Department of Emergency Management – Hurricane](#)
2. [National Hurricane Preparedness](#)
3. [Virginia Know Your Zone Tool \(arcgis.com\)](#)
4. [FEMA hurricane website](#)
5. [Virginia hurricane preparedness guide](#)
6. [VDEM guidance on emergency preparedness kits](#)
7. [Extensive toolkit to help you prepare for hurricanes](#)
8. [Local emergency manager directory](#)
9. [Resource access: 2-1-1 Virginia](#)
10. [VA CSB Directory](#)
11. You may also refer to the attached Hurricane Readiness Assessment

The Office of Licensing is grateful to the provider community and to all the staff for your tireless commitment to the individuals you serve.

## Hurricane Readiness Assessment

1. Do you know the risks you might face from hurricanes?
  - a. What are your risks from heavy wind?
  - b. What are your risks from flooding?
  - c. What are your risks from tornadoes?
  - d. What are your risks from loss of power?
  - e. What are your risks if you can't get to the store or pharmacy for several days?
  
2. Do you have an emergency plan written out?
  - a. What will you do 2 or 3 days in advance of a hurricane to mitigate your risk?
  - b. How will you prepare your infrastructure for hurricanes?
  - c. Do you have a list of essential contacts readily available?
  - d. Do you have all essential information for the individuals you serve readily available in multiple forms?
  - e. If you live in an evacuation zone, do you know your zone?
  - f. Have you planned out how you will continue operating if a hurricane hits?
  
3. How is your communication?
  - a. Have you subscribed to your local emergency alert system?
  - b. Do you know the television and radio stations to call for further alerts?
  - c. Does your local emergency manager know about you, the people you serve, and any special needs that exist (oxygen machines, regular dialysis treatment, etc.)?
  - d. Do the individuals you serve and their families know your emergency plan?
  - e. How will you establish contact if power or internet is out? Cell service is down?
  
4. When a hurricane is imminent: how are your supplies?
  - a. Do you have enough nonperishable food to last several days without power?
  - b. Do you have a three-day supply of water (1 gallon per person per day)?
  - c. Do you have an adequate supply of medication and other essentials?
  - d. Do you have an emergency preparedness kit?
  
5. Have you practiced your plan?

