

**Emergency Information for Audiologists
Serving Patients, D/HH Individuals, and their Families
Affected by Hurricane Helene**

Replacement of Lost or Irreparable Hearing Devices:

Some may be able to assist/ship batteries as well

HEARING AIDS

Phonak

If you have patients whose hearing devices or accessories (Roger) were lost or damaged due to the hurricane and its aftermath, we will replace them at no charge. Get in touch with your Phonak representative or email us at us-ph-cssagents@phonak.com with the subject line "Disaster Relief." We will prioritize these requests and are working hard to minimize downtime for your patients during this crisis.

Oticon

Oticon is offering Disaster Relief by supplying Oticon hearing aids to Hearing Care Professionals in the South Region who volunteer their services to aid disaster victims. Oticon will replace lost or damaged Oticon hearing aids, as well as service Oticon instruments that are up to 3 years old at no cost to the Patient. To request support, please complete the [Disaster Relief Claim Form](#) and email it to TransactionalExcellence@oticon.com or fax to **732.560.7376**. For additional assistance, contact Oticon at **800.526.3921** (Option #2) to speak with an Oticon Representative."

Starkey

It is our ongoing mission to provide better hearing around the world, and we understand how precious the sounds of friends and loved ones are during challenging times. If any of your patients lost their hearing aids during the hurricane, regardless of the brand, please contact your sales representative. Starkey Cares will replace your patient's hearing aid at no charge.

starkeycares@starkey.com

(855) 686-220

Signia

Should you have patients whose Signia hearing aids were lost or damaged due to the Hurricane Helene, we will replace them at no cost to your patients. Please contact your Signia representative for assistance, and we will work with you to expedite replacements. (800) 766-4500

ReSound

consumerhelp@gnresound.com

(888) 735-4327

Unitron

services@unitron.com

Widex

Devices will be replaced under the disaster relief loss/damage policy. Contact your Widex representative for assistance. HCPs can contact Fayne Fischer or Michael Paff directly at:

fayne.fischer@widexsound.com or michael.paff@widexsound.com

IMPLANTABLE DEVICES

MED-EL

If you need help replacing equipment, ordering extra batteries, or getting in contact with your clinic, we are here for you! Our on-call customer service team is available 24/7 to offer support at (888) 633-3524.

Cochlear Americas

If you, your clinic, or your patients need replacement equipment, assistance in servicing patients, or help staying on air, we're here for you. Many recipients can use rechargeable or disposable batteries; most rechargers have USB connections that allow for charging flexibility. Our ProCare service team is ready to assist with any needs that arise: <https://www.cochlear.com/us/en/connect/contact-us>

Clinics may contact their Area Manager with specific questions or concerns at: MWilson@cochlear.com

Advanced Bionics

AB is going to be replacing any core components of equipment lost in Hurricane Helene. The best way to request this would be for recipients/families/providers to contact us with their requests at customerservice@advancedbionics.com

EARMOLDS/ACCESSORIES/CLINIC SUPPLIES

Oaktree Products

AU Bankaitis au@oaktreeproducts.com or (314) 440-4024

Pediatric Audiology Clinic Social Workers

Duke Hearing Center for Children and Families – Ashley Millinichik
ashley.milichik@duke.edu or (919) 357-1837

Children’s Cochlear Implant Center at UNC – Natalie Giduz
Natalie.Giduz2@unchealth.unc.edu or (919) 419-1449

Newborn Hearing Screening

All WNC hospitals are currently able to perform NBHS as of 10/3/24. Mission is delaying outpatient rescreen scheduling at this time due to resource limitations. Submission of hearing screening results may be completed by hand on NBS specimen filter paper as needed if access to HearingLink is unavailable.

Contact the NC EHDI Team for assistance obtaining NBHS or follow-up care after NBHS if displaced or unable to receive care at the originally intended location(s):

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/nc-ehdicounty-map4-1-2023pdf/open> - Regional Consultants

Email ncnewbornhearing@dhhs.nc.gov if unsure which regional team member to contact, or if you’d like to send in screening result(s) or have diagnosed a NC-born infant with hearing loss. You can also send info via fax to: 919-870-4881

Providers ONLY may contact HearingLink support at Hearing.Link@dhhs.nc.gov or (828) 838-4013

Permission for Referral Forms (for diagnoses of permanent HL ages birth – 21):

[English Version](#)

[Spanish Version](#)

Share the Who Else Can Help My Child Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing After A Diagnosis? Flyer for all newly diagnosed families. The flyer gives them information on all of the early intervention services in North Carolina.

[English Version](#)

[Spanish Version](#)

Spanish-speaking families can contact our EHDI Parent Consultant with questions/concerns:

Keila Armas Velasquez

Mobile: 919-906-6173

keila.armasvelasquez@dhhs.nc.gov

EHDI Contacts for Other States:

<https://www.infanthearing.org/statematerials/index.html>

Important Medicaid Information for Providers – Current as of 10/8/2024

From the NC Medicaid Division of Health Benefits (link): [A Virtual Bulletin Board with Helpful Resources and Information on Hurricane Helene | NC Medicaid \(ncdhhs.gov\)](#)

and

[Update on NC Medicaid Temporary Flexibilities Due to Hurricane Helene – October 1, 2024 | NC Medicaid \(ncdhhs.gov\)](#)*

(will update link if and when details change)

*The flexibilities in this bulletin are effective from Sept. 26, 2024, through Oct. 15, 2024 (unless otherwise communicated by DHHS). As a reminder, **providers should always check NC Medicaid eligibility in NCTracks to confirm beneficiary enrollment in NC Medicaid**, especially when the beneficiary presents without a Medicaid ID or their health plan ID card, to determine which health benefit the beneficiary is enrolled in and whether their eligibility remains current.

Includes:

Disaster Relief Applications Available for Health Care Providers Not Currently Enrolled as a NC Medicaid Provider: The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) granted approval effective Oct. 1, 2024, for NC Medicaid to implement a temporary, expedited enrollment process for health care providers to become a NC Medicaid provider due to a natural disaster. This process is available to enroll with a begin date of Sept. 25, 2024. The process will remain available through Oct. 15, 2024, and is *not* for providers who are already enrolled with NC Medicaid. More information available via the link.

Note: Using the NCTracks system allows providers to enroll and their applications to be processed in an expeditious manner. The Disaster Relief application type is available to In-State, Border, and Out-of-State (OOS) Individual and Organization providers. Once the Disaster Relief provider application is approved, the enrollment period will be 180 days from the requested enrollment effective begin date.

Please refer to the disaster provider enrollment job aid [Disaster Relief Provider Enrollment Application Job Aid \(PRV703\)](#) for necessary instructions to complete the temporary disaster provider enrollment application. Be sure to review the job aid before starting to complete the application, as several preliminary steps are necessary.

Reimbursement for medically necessary services:

NC Medicaid Direct and NC Medicaid Managed Care will reimburse providers for medically necessary drugs and services, equipment and supplies, provided during the Hurricane Helene emergency without prior authorization (PA) starting Sept. 26, 2024, through Oct. 15, 2024, (unless otherwise communicated by DHHS). Medical documentation must support medical necessity. Providers are encouraged to obtain a PA if it is possible to do so (and normally required for the service). All claims are subject to audit. Additional information and requirements for out-of-state providers who may be attending to evacuated or displaced patients are available via the link.

If you have questions, please contact:

- NCTracks Call Center: 800-688-6696
- Provider Ombudsman: 866-304-7062, Medicaid.ProviderOmbudsman@dhhs.nc.gov

Clinics Accepting Displaced Patients

Services available, including: ages served, manufacturer software/accessories available, insurances accepted including Medicaid Managed Care Plans, and hours may vary by location.

Note: Most large established pediatric audiology/ENT sites throughout North Carolina are able to see displaced pediatric patients from WNC.

You can find a pediatric clinic for NC and other states at:

<https://www.ehdi-pals.org/default.aspx#gsc.tab=0>

In-Person (List by Region/Location):

Greenville, SC:

Upstate Hearing and Balance

25 Woods Lake Rd. Ste 401

Text/Call 864-770-8822 or hello@upstatehear.com

Anyone can come use their space to recharge devices, can help facilitate device replacements

North Wilkesboro, NC:

Hearing Center of Wilkes

100 9th Street Suite B

336-667-4700

Elizabethton, TN:

ETSU Nave Center - *includes pediatrics and CI services*

1000 Jason Witten Way

423-439-4355

423-439-5070

bramlette@etsu.edu

Abingdon, VA

Bluestone Hearing & Tinnitus Center

966 W. Main St., Suite E

(276) 285-2327

Telehealth:

Entheos/Hearing The Call: Audiology cooperative and their member-affiliated 501c3 charitable organization. Members based in the Carolinas are currently collaborating on ways they may be able to

help provide services or assistance to those affected by Helene. Contact Sandy Riley at sandy@entheoshearing.com or 260-417-2636 with questions.

Other Tips for Hearing Technology in an Emergency

- Check with your homeowner's or renter's policy to see if your hearing aids are covered and what your deductible is. If you've chosen a high deductible to save on premiums, the deductible may be far more than the cost of the hearing aid.
 - Rechargeable Hearing Aids When the Power is Out: USB cables and connections allow for charging flexibility. Consider any USB power sources that may be available to you such as charging in the car, solar or battery-powered generators, or laptop computers. Portable solar USB power banks may be available for purchase online or at local retailers, particularly outdoor/camping gear stores.
 - Rechargeable battery components of cochlear implants can typically be swapped out for use of disposable batteries.
 - Hearing aid batteries are typically available at pharmacies if you cannot reach your audiologist or your audiologist is out of stock. Contact your manufacturer customer service if you need cochlear implant batteries.
-

GENERAL HEALTH AND SAFETY RESOURCES

North Carolina Department of Public Safety (DPS) Emergency Management Resources

[Hurricane Helene | NC DPS](#)

- County Information
- Open Shelters
- Outage/Utility Information
- Red Cross and United Way Reunification/Missing Person/Welfare Check Information
- FEMA Application and Assistance
- Report Price Gouging

Transportation/Road Closure Information: [DriveNC.gov | North Carolina Traffic, Road Closures & Travel Information](#)

Disability and Disaster Hotline: If you are impacted by Hurricane Helene and need help, call or text The Disability and Disaster Hotline at 800-626-4959 or hotline@disasterstrategies.org

Mental Health Resources:

- SAMHSA Disaster Distress Helpline is Available in multiple languages including American Sign Language at 1-800-985-5990
- From the NC Psychological Association:
<https://www.ncpsychology.org/hurricane-helene-disaster-resources>

Disaster Unemployment Assistance

People in the 25 counties as well as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina have 60 days from Oct. 1, 2024 to file an application for DUA at des.nc.gov. The deadline to apply is Dec. 2, 2024.

DUA is available in these counties for weeks of unemployment effective Sept. 29, 2024, and may last for up to 26 weeks (or through March 29, 2025). Eligibility for DUA is determined weekly, and you must continue to be out of work as a direct result of the disaster each week to get unemployment benefits.

Claims are filed through the DES website at des.nc.gov. If you are not able to file through the website, you can call the DUA Hotline at 919-629-3857 to apply for benefits.

Resources in ASL:

- Disaster Distress Helpline is Available in multiple languages including American Sign Language at 1-800-985-5990
- Helpful information on shelters, clean-up, food, and other resources can be found at nc211.org or via NC 211 by dialing 2-1-1, or at 1-888-892-1162 if using Relay service.
- DSDHH Community Accessibility Specialists are available to answer questions about resources and assistance:
<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/services-deaf-and-hard-hearing-dsdhh/regional-centers-deaf-and-hard-hearing>
- Press conferences are available with ASL interpreters and can also be viewed from computer or smartphone: <https://www.ncdps.gov/news/news-conference-live-streams> or <https://www.pbsnc.org/emergency-management-services/>
- DSDHH Facebook Updates: <https://www.facebook.com/NCSDSDHH/timeline/>

Resources in Spanish:

EHDI Parent Consultant:

Keila Armas Velasquez

Mobile: 919-906-6173

keila.armasvelasquez@dhhs.nc.gov

Additional Support:

BEGINNINGS (NC): <https://ncbegin.org/>

BEGINNINGS (SC): <http://beginningssc.org/>

The CARE Project: thecareproject.com

contact: Johnnie Sexton or Lara Pike

NC DPI

ELSSP-HI Intake Coordinator:

Ruth Anne Everett: Ruth.anne.everett@dpi.nc.gov Phone: 828-781-4979 Fax: 919-733-1873
Mandy Hice: mandy.hice@dpi.nc.gov Phone: 828-448-9353 Fax: 919-733-1873

OTHER INFORMATION FOR AUDIOLOGISTS IN WNC

Disaster Unemployment Assistance

People in the 25 counties as well as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians of North Carolina have 60 days from Oct. 1, 2024 to file an application for DUA at des.nc.gov. The deadline to apply is Dec. 2, 2024.

DUA is available in these counties for weeks of unemployment effective Sept. 29, 2024, and may last for up to 26 weeks (or through March 29, 2025). Eligibility for DUA is determined weekly, and you must continue to be out of work as a direct result of the disaster each week to get unemployment benefits.

Claims are filed through the DES website at des.nc.gov. If you are not able to file through the website, you can call the DUA Hotline at 919-629-3857 to apply for benefits.

Providers needing financial assistance with annual membership dues

If due to financial hardship if an audiologist cannot afford their annual dues to their professional organizations, please reach out below to the organization.

ASHA:

- If you are unable to pay your 2025 ASHA dues by December 31, 2024, you may request a late fee waiver. The waiver extends the payment due date without incurring any additional fees. You will have until February 28, 2025, to renew for 2025.
- If you have been significantly financially impacted by Hurricane Helene, and may need further financial assistance, ASHA will consider requests for a **full waiver** of 2025 dues on a case-by-case basis. Complete the ASHA Hardship Request Form to submit your request.
- Impacted members may also request Learning Pass Hardship Access, which gives you short-term free access to the ASHA Learning Pass.
- If you need replacement certification paperwork, ASHA will offer it at no cost. Contact: certification@asha.org

AAA:

Member Support Program:

<https://www.audiology.org/about/academy-membership/member-support-program/>

NCAA: Contact at NCAUDIOLOGYASSOCIATION@gmail.com

NC Board of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (NCBOESLPA): [Hurricane Helene Resources - North Carolina Board of Examiners for SLPA \(ncboeslpa.org\)](https://www.ncboeslpa.org/hurricane-helene-resources)

At the October 7, 2024 meeting the Board determined to make the following allowances:

In response to Hurricane Helene and pursuant to [21 NCAC 64.0108 Waiver](#) and [North Carolina Executive Order 318](#), the Board will grant the following waivers/allowances to any NC licensees affected by Hurricane Helene without the need for submission of the waiver/allowance form.

- Effective October 7, 2024, pursuant to North Carolina Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 318, Section 1, the NCBOESLPA the 30-day grace period under Article 22. Licensure Act for Speech and Language Pathologists and Audiologists. § 90-300. "Renewal of Licenses", was extended to 90 days.
- Effective October 7, 2024, pursuant to North Carolina Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 318, Section 1, the NCBOESLPA will provide a three-month extension on the CEU requirement for licensees whose 3-year continuing education cycle ends on December 31, 2024.

In response to Hurricane Helene and pursuant to 21 NCAC 64.0108 Waiver and North Carolina Executive Order 318, the Board will grant the following waivers/allowances on a discretionary basis. The Board has created a contact page specifically for those impacted by the storm to request the following waivers/allowances. The waiver/allowance form can be found here:

<https://ncboeslpa.org/helene-waiver-request-forms-and-waivers/>

- Effective October 7, 2024, pursuant to North Carolina Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 318, Section 1, the NCBOESLPA will allow licensed providers in other states that do not currently hold a license in North Carolina to provide services via telepractice to residents in North Carolina as long as their state licensure board has also implemented allowances for them to provide services via telepractice into remote states. It is incumbent on the licensee to verify and attest in writing that the state licensure board where they are physically located has also implemented allowances for them to provide services via telepractice into remote states.
- Effective October 7, 2024, pursuant to North Carolina Governor Cooper's Executive Order No. 318, Section 1, the NCBOESLPA will not enforce the rule requiring North Carolina licensed providers to hold a license in the state where they are physically located when providing services to their North Carolina patients so long as their state licensure board has also implemented allowances for them to provide services via telepractice into remote states. It is incumbent on the licensee to verify and attest in writing that the state licensure board where they are physically located has also implemented allowances for them to provide services via telepractice into remote states.

[PDF copy of Helene Special Waiver Request Form](#)

[PDF copy of Helene Telepractice Waiver Request Form](#)