

Displaced Foster Families Guidance

NCDSS has approved the following accommodations for licensed foster families and supervising agencies who have been affected by hurricane Helene:

- The NCDSS will allow “temporary” living arrangements without imposing licensure regulations, for foster families in the affected areas through 1/1/25. Supervising agencies will continue to alert guardians and keep a record of all displaced foster families and children.
- The licensing authority will receive and prioritize foster home licensing change requests for foster families in the affected areas who move into temporary living situations lasting beyond 1/1/25 (apartment, home rental, FEMA trailer). The change request must include a fire inspection completed by a local fire inspector and an environmental checklist completed by the supervising agency social worker after visiting the new temporary residence. On a case-by-case basis, some non-safety regulations may be waived as requested by the supervising agency.
- The licensing authority will also receive and prioritize foster home licensing change requests for foster families in the affected areas who need to reside with extended family or friends beyond 1/1/25 (merging of two households with other adult and child members). The supervising agency must submit a foster home licensing change request indicating an address change. This type of change will also require additional household members to be added and must include all required background checks for all adult household members. In some cases, the licensing authority may waive capacity limits if allowable by NC General Statute, consider non-bedrooms as temporary bedrooms and consider waivers for other regulations that are not specific to the child’s safety. The licensing authority strongly recommends that foster parents not allow other adults in the home to take on the role of caretaker for foster children, therefore, eliminating the pre-service training requirement.
- The licensing authority will allow extensions of foster home licenses until 1/1/25 for those who reside in affected areas whose license expires between 9/27/24 and 12/31/24, without the foster parents’ signatures or the documentation that is normally required. Supervising agencies must subsequently submit a full relicense application with all required attachments to the licensing authority on or before 1/1/25 to have the license fully extended for the normal two-year period.
- When foster families are returning home to find damage to their home and/or property, the supervising agency licensing worker should visit the home as soon as possible to assess all safety concerns. If the licensing worker determines that it is safe for foster children to remain in home while repairs are made, they should provide this information in writing to the licensing authority and the guardian of any child currently placed with the family. If a safety plan is warranted the licensing worker must develop a specific safety plan with the family and submit the plan to the licensing authority. Supervising agencies should not make new placements in a foster home where damage exists, and repairs are in progress.
- Supervising agencies, both public and private, in affected areas that are unable to meet the face-to-face visits and supervision requirements will be authorized to conduct visits virtually until 12/1/24.