



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**  
Division of Social Services

ROY COOPER • Governor  
MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary  
WAYNE E. BLACK • Director

October 3, 2018

**DEAR COUNTY DIRECTORS OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**DEAR EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS OF LICENSED CHILD PLACING AGENCIES**

**ATTENTION: Directors, Program Managers and Child Welfare Professionals responsible for Foster Home Licensing**

**SUBJECT: ACCOMODATIONS FOR FOSTER FAMILIES DISPLACED by HURRICANE FLORENCE**

**REQUIRED ACTION:**  Information Only  Time Sensitive (10/3/2018)  Immediate

As the state authority for foster home licensing, the North Carolina Division of Social Services (DSS) recognizes that many families have been negatively affected by hurricane Florence. This includes many licensed foster families who continued to ensure the safety and well-being of children in their care even as their families were being displaced and their homes were damaged or destroyed.

In an attempt to provide guidance and relief wherever possible, DSS has approved the following accommodations for licensed foster families and supervising agencies who have been affected by hurricane Florence:

- The licensing authority will allow “temporary” living arrangements to continue, without imposing licensure regulations, for foster families in the affected areas through 10/31/18. 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 10/31/18 (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 10/31/18 (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 that additional household members be added and must include all required background checks for all adult household members and medical evaluations for all adult and child household members. In some cases, the licensing authority may waive capacity limits, consider non-bedrooms as temporary bedrooms and will consider waivers for other regulations that are not specific to the child’s safety. The

**NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES • CHILD WELFARE SERVICES**

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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 consider extensions of foster home licenses until 11/30/18, for those who reside in affected areas whose license expires between 9/7/18 and 10/31/18, without the foster parents' signatures or the documentation that is normally required. This will allow supervising agencies additional time to complete relicensing activities during recovery from hurricane Florence. Supervising agencies must email the licensing authority Program Manager, Michelle Reines, and copy Processing Assistants, Deborah Morrison and Tina Johnson, to make this request. Supervising agencies must subsequently submit a full relicense application with all required attachments to the licensing authority on or before 11/30/18 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 in affected areas who are providing therapeutic foster care services and are unable to meet weekly supervision requirements should contact their Program Consultant immediately to discuss this concern. The supervising agency can request a waiver of this Administrative Rule requirement that may be approved until 10/31/18. The supervising agency will also need to contact the MCO associated with the specific children who are affected to seek approval.

If you have questions or concerns please contact Michelle Reines at [michelle.reines@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:michelle.reines@dhhs.nc.gov) or 828-232-3160, [linda.waite@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:linda.waite@dhhs.nc.gov) or 704-341-7300 or your assigned Program Consultant.

As always, thank you for your dedication to serving children and families.

Sincerely,



Lisa Cauley, Deputy Director  
Child Welfare Services

Cc: Michael Becketts, Assistant Secretary for Human Services  
Kristin O'Connor, Section Chief for Policy and Programs  
Linda Waite, Regulatory and Licensing Program Administrator  
Teresa Strom, Local Support Team Manager  
Kathy Dobbs, Staff Development Program Manager