



NC DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

KODY H. KINSLEY • Secretary

CARLA WEST • Division Director, Human Services

December 3, 2024

**Dear County Directors of Social Services**

**Subject:** DCDL\_DSS\_Rental Assistance\_1 Emergency Rental Assistance Program

**Priority:** Time Sensitive, Action & Response Required

**I. General Information**

Session Law 2024-53, Section 4B.7. allocates \$1 million in Rental Assistance specifically for residents of the following North Carolina counties who have suffered hardship due to Hurricane Helene: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes, and Yancey counties. Individuals and households who reside in one of these counties, either temporarily or permanently, who have suffered hardship due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene and meet the income eligibility criteria as outlined below will be eligible to receive Rental Assistance through their local county Department of Social Services.

**Session Law 2024-53 SECTION 4B.7 – RENTAL ASSISTANCE**

Of the funds appropriated in this act to the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services (Division), the sum of one million dollars (\$1,000,000) in nonrecurring funds shall be allocated to county departments of social services to provide rental assistance to individuals who reside, temporarily or permanently, in counties in the affected area that qualify for FEMA Individual and Public Assistance Categories A-G. Assistance shall be limited to households at or below two hundred percent (200%) of the federal poverty level who have suffered hardship due to the impacts of Hurricane Helene. These households shall receive a one-time payment up to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) local area Fair Market Rents (FMRs) measure for a two-bedroom unit. Payments under this section shall be used to assist households facing a housing crisis, such as imminent risk of eviction. County departments of social services may use up to five percent (5%) of their allocated amount for administrative costs.

This letter serves to provide counties with the necessary guidance and procedures for the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) program. It is imperative that all employees involved in assisting with the process review this DCDL carefully before the program begins.

The Department will review spending across all 25 counties by March 31, 2025. The review will assess whether each county has utilized its allocated funds and whether there is any unspent balance. If counties have not used their allocated funds or have

a large remaining balance, the Department may reallocate those funds. Reallocation will be made to counties that demonstrate a greater need for assistance.

## II. Implementation Instructions and Eligibility Criteria:

The goals of these funds are to address critical housing needs across various vulnerable populations. Specifically, the objectives are:

1. **Prevent Family Separation and Foster Care Involvement:** The funds will ensure that families have access to adequate housing, reducing the likelihood of children being removed from their homes and placed into foster care due to unstable living conditions.
2. **Support Aging Citizens:** The initiative will help older adults remain in their homes and communities by providing the necessary resources to help them live independently for as long as possible, reducing the need for institutional care or facility placement.
3. **Prevent Homelessness:** The funds will aim to address and prevent homelessness by providing housing stability for individuals and families at risk, helping them secure safe, permanent housing before they fall into homelessness.

These efforts will contribute to stronger, more stable communities by focusing on housing as a key factor in supporting families, seniors, and individuals facing housing insecurity.

### Eligibility Criteria:

1. **Residency:** Applicants must reside in one of the counties listed above, either temporarily or permanently.
2. **Housing Crisis Due to the Disaster:** The applicant must have experienced a housing-related crisis caused by the disaster. This includes:
  1. Displacement from their home due to damage or destruction.
  2. Inability to pay rent or facing eviction as a result of the disaster's impact on their income or housing situation.
3. **Income Eligibility:** To qualify for **Rental Assistance** under Session Law 2024-53, Section 4B.7, the household income must be at or below **200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)**. The 2024 Federal Poverty Guidelines will be used to determine eligibility.

## 2024 FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES

Effective as of January 2024

Household Size	200% of Poverty Monthly Income
1	\$2,510.00
2	\$3,406.67
3	\$4,303.33
4	\$5,200.00
5	\$6,096.67
6	\$6,993.33
7	\$7,890.00
8	\$8,786.67
For each additional person, add \$896.67	

The approved households will be eligible for a one-time payment, which will be made directly to their landlord, covering the cost of housing up to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) local area Fair Market Rents (FMRs) for a two-bedroom unit. This payment will help ensure that eligible households can remain housed and avoid displacement due to financial hardship.

The **Fair Market Rent (FMR)** is a measure set by HUD that represents the rent limits for various counties, used to determine eligibility for housing assistance programs. The FMR varies by geographic location and is designed to reflect local market conditions for rental housing.

To determine the exact amount of support available, you will need to refer to the specific FMR rates listed by county for the two-bedroom unit as follows:

Alexander	\$1,014	Jackson	\$ 895
Alleghany	\$ 861	Lincoln	\$1,089
Ashe	\$ 856	Macon	\$ 962
Avery	\$1,026	Madison	\$1,680
Buncombe	\$1,680	McDowell	\$ 856
Burke	\$1,014	Mitchell	\$ 856
Caldwell	\$1,014	Polk	\$1,004
Catawba	\$1,014	Rutherford	\$ 856
Clay	\$ 930	Transylvania	\$1,128
Cleveland	\$ 856	Watauga	\$1,140
Gaston	\$1,200	Wilkes	\$ 856
Haywood	\$1,237	Yancey	\$ 856
Henderson	\$1,680		

If a household was **not impacted by Hurricane Helene** but is still experiencing a crisis, they may be eligible for a range of other assistance programs that can help with housing, financial hardship, and other needs. These programs vary based on location, the type of crisis, and household eligibility. By evaluating the household's specific needs and available resources, you can help direct them to the most appropriate programs to address their crisis.

### III. Guidance for Emergency Rental Assistance Process

To ensure proper eligibility determination, the following procedures should be followed by counties:

#### 1. Required Documentation:

- **Lease (if available):** Request a copy of the lease agreement. This will serve as proof of the rental obligation and ensure that the rental assistance is being directed to the appropriate landlord.
- **Proof of Income:** Request proof of income. When determining income eligibility, use the base period income—specifically, the income from the month prior. This ensures that the income reflects the household's current financial situation.
  - Acceptable forms of income verification may include pay stubs, tax returns, bank statements, or other documentation that accurately represents the household's income.
- **Verification of Identity:** Verification of identity is required to confirm eligibility. Acceptable methods of identity verification include:
  - A state or federally issued ID (e.g., driver's license, passport)
  - A utility bill showing their name and address
  - A lease or rental agreement in the household's name

#### 2. Contacting the Landlord:

- **Rental Status Verification:** Counties should contact the landlord to verify the rental status. This includes confirming that the applicant resides at the rental property.
- **Payment Details:** Confirm with the landlord the following:
  - How the check should be written (e.g., to the landlord or property management company).
  - Where the payment should be sent (e.g., landlord's address or a designated address for payment processing).

#### Reasons for Denial:

1. **Residency Requirement:** Households must have been residing in one of the designated disaster counties during the time of the disaster (e.g., Hurricane Helene) to qualify for Emergency Rental Assistance. If the household was residing in one of the 25 impacted counties at the time of the disaster but has since relocated to a non-impacted county, they are not eligible for Emergency Rental Assistance.
2. **Housing Crisis Due to the Disaster:** The household must have experienced a housing-related crisis caused by the disaster. This includes:
  - Displacement from their home due to damage or destruction.
  - Inability to pay rent or facing eviction as a result of the disaster's impact on their income or housing situation.

If either of these criteria is not met, the household is not eligible for assistance under this program, and it should be denied.

#### IV. Department of Social Services Employees

Any County DSS employee who wishes to receive Emergency Rental Assistance must be seen by a supervisor who is designated by the county Director of Social Services. The supervisor will review to ensure that all eligibility requirements are met and that there is no conflict of interest in the process. The supervisor will also verify eligibility, confirm that the employee meets all necessary criteria for assistance, and ensure that all documentation (e.g., proof of income, lease, etc.) is submitted correctly.

#### V. Allocations

**NOTE: This is notice of the anticipated allocation that will be advanced to the local County Department of Social Services. You will receive notification of when the funds will be available.**

The \$1,000,000 allocated for Emergency Rental Assistance will be distributed across the 25 counties identified in the disaster declaration according to a pro-rata formula.

The funds will be allocated as follows:

##### **Base Allocation:**

- \$125,000, will be evenly distributed across all 25 counties. This provides each county with a base amount of \$5,000.

##### **Pro-Rata Allocation:**

- The remaining \$875,000 will be distributed among the 25 counties based on a formula that considers the following factors:
  - Poverty level in each county as of September 30, 2024.
  - The number of households receiving Food and Nutrition Services as of September 30, 2024.
  - To ensure allocations align with the scope and severity of impact, a tiered approach was applied based on county impact categories from the Governor's Hurricane Helene Recovery Recommendations and the Preliminary Damage and Needs Assessment dated October 23, 2024. Of the 25 counties identified in the federal disaster declaration on September 28, 2024:
    - 15 counties were classified as **Critical** – Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancey
    - 10 counties were classified as **High** – Alexander, Alleghany, Catawba, Clay, Cleveland, Gaston, Jackson, Lincoln, Macon, and Wilkes

##### **Administrative Costs:**

- 5% of the allocation can be used by the county for administrative costs. This is the portion that counties can utilize to cover operational costs related to managing the program.

This allocation ensures that the funds are distributed in a manner that prioritizes areas with higher need, while also providing a base amount to each county for initial assistance. The distribution formula also reflects the socio-economic conditions of each county, with more funds directed to counties with greater poverty rates and more households in need of food assistance.

County Name	Allocation
Alexander	\$ 10,913
Alleghany	\$ 7,059
Ashe	\$ 27,859
Avery	\$ 17,414
Buncombe	\$ 199,296
Burke	\$ 73,294
Caldwell	\$ 82,101
Catawba	\$ 31,477
Clay	\$ 6,945
Cleveland	\$ 29,261
Gaston	\$ 45,646
Haywood	\$ 51,357
Henderson	\$ 77,056
Jackson	\$ 12,405
Lincoln	\$ 16,656
Macon	\$ 10,643
Madison	\$ 23,950
McDowell	\$ 50,935
Mitchell	\$ 19,378
Polk	\$ 18,449
Rutherford	\$ 74,724
Transylvania	\$ 28,262
Watauga	\$ 42,823
Wilkes	\$ 20,353
Yancey	\$ 21,744
	\$ 1,000,000

## VI. Tracking Expenditures

To ensure efficient management and real-time tracking of Emergency Rental Assistance Program, the following procedures will be implemented:

### 1. Tracking through the Emergency Rental Assistance Reporting Tool:

- Counties must use this [\\*LINK\\*](#) to access the reporting tool.
- The Emergency Rental Assistance Reporting Tool is essential for all counties involved in the process and will be used to maintain an accurate record of spending.
- Required information for submission includes:
  - Name of county

- First and last name of person completing survey
- Email of the person completing survey
- First and last name of the head of household receiving the funds
- Name of the landlord to whom the payment is being sent
- Total amount spent by county for each household
- Spending will be tracked in real-time, allowing for transparent and up-to-date visibility on the allocation of funds.

**2. Real-Time Spending Tracking:**

- Spending will be tracked daily, meaning the current status of funds will be visible to counties on a daily basis. This provides transparency and allows counties to monitor and manage their budget effectively.
- Daily updates will help counties stay on top of the funds that have been allocated and ensure that resources are used efficiently.

**3. Reporting Spending:**

- It is crucial that counties report spending through the Emergency Rental Assistance Form as funds are disbursed. This ensures that all data is accurate and up to date, allowing for proper tracking and decision-making regarding the distribution of funds.
- As funds are allocated, the Emergency Rental Assistance Form will reflect these changes in real time.

Please submit any questions regarding this information to Danielle Upchurch at [Danielle.upchurch@dhhs.nc.gov](mailto:Danielle.upchurch@dhhs.nc.gov). A Frequently Asked Questions document will be generated with the questions and answers as received.

Sincerely,



Carla West  
Division Director, Human Services  
Child Support, Economic Services, Aging, and Operations

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