

We are about two weeks since the worst of Helene's impacts began. Here are the Key Messages we've gathered for **Sunday, October 13**.

Requests for legal assistance are beginning to come into Legal Aid of NC and Pisgah Legal Services in addition to other organizations. Those requests are being reviewed by intake staff to determine whether the matter is appropriate for a pro bono professional. Please remember that based on our experience with disaster recovery, we know that this will be a prolonged response effort, potentially taking years to resolve the legal challenges that arise.

### **> State and Federal Assistance Programs**

**1. Everyone impacted by Helene should apply for FEMA Individual Assistance.**

Applications for FEMA Individual Assistance are an important metric that often determines other kinds of individual and public recovery supports from public, volunteer, and philanthropic sources. Call 800-621-3362, visit [DisasterAssistance.gov](https://DisasterAssistance.gov) or [apply in person](#).

- a. Encourage survivors to take pictures and videos of everything.
- b. [Tips to navigate the application - Social Media Post](#).
- c. [Legal Aid of NC](#) and [Pisgah Legal](#) can assist with applications and appeals to FEMA, for homeowners and rentals dealing with damage and displacement, and for fraud support. Check their websites and social media for virtual, phone, and mobile in-person options.
- d. Louisiana Sea Grant created how-to-videos on navigation of a major disaster declaration. [Disaster Aid: Videos - Louisiana Sea Grant](#)

**2. Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing (RUSH).** "The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) today announced \$3 million for the State of North Carolina to support people experiencing homelessness in communities impacted by Hurricane Helene. Funding from the Rapid Unsheltered Survivor Housing (RUSH) program will help residents and families who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have needs that are not otherwise served or fully met by existing Federal disaster relief programs."

- a. The eligible activities for this funding include: (1) For people experiencing homelessness before the disaster: emergency shelter; rapid re-housing, which provides up to 24 months of rental assistance, financial assistance for move in costs, and supportive services; and (2) For people who were at-risk of experiencing homelessness before the disaster: homelessness

prevention, which provides up to 24 months of rental assistance, utility assistance, and supportive services for people at risk of homelessness; and outreach assistance, including assistance to meet urgent needs.

- b. Details on how the program will be managed are forthcoming. Learn more: [https://www.hud.gov/press/press\\_releases\\_media\\_advisories/HUD\\_No\\_24\\_269](https://www.hud.gov/press/press_releases_media_advisories/HUD_No_24_269)
3. **Disaster Unemployment Assistance.** "DUA eligibility is much broader than regular Unemployment Insurance – in addition to workers who are out of work because the employer is temporarily or permanently closed, self-employed workers, workers unable to get to work because of transportation barriers, and workers injured by the storm and are therefore unable to work may all be eligible."
  - a. DUA Hotline: English 919-629-3857, Spanish 919-276-5698
  - b. [En español.](#)
4. "**FEMA Public Assistance** provides supplemental grants to state, tribal, territorial, and local governments, **and certain types of private non-profits** so communities can quickly respond to and recover from major disasters or emergencies." Learn more: <https://www.fema.gov/assistance/public>. North Carolina Emergency Management has grants managers that can support applications: <https://www.ncdps.gov/PAContactMap/open>.
5. "**SBA** disaster loans may be available to homeowners, renters, and businesses of all sizes in areas covered by a disaster declaration." <https://lending.sba.gov/search-disaster/?disaster=NC-20007>

#### > **Elections and Voting (Source: Democracy NC)**

1. **Trusted up-to-date resources:**
  - a. [ncsbe.gov/helene](https://ncsbe.gov/helene) - This is the website created by the NC State Board of Elections that has up-to-date information for voters impacted by Hurricane Helene. Information about changes to early voting and Election Day polling places will be posted here.
  - b. [Voting Information for People Affected by Hurricane Helene](#) - Democracy NC has created a 1-page resource related to residency, voting by mail, and in-person voting. If a person is temporarily displaced and plans to return, they keep their prior residence for voting purposes. For example, if a person is

registered to vote in Watauga but is temporarily residing in Wake, for voting, that person is still considered a Watauga voter.

- c. 888-OUR-VOTE (888-687-8683) - North Carolina's non-partisan voter hotline. Folks can text or call this number and receive support with their voting questions.
- d. [Hot Tips for Voting \(English\)](#) and [Hot Tips for Voting \(Spanish\)](#)

2. **Flexibility for voters impacted by disasters.** Voters from the following counties now have more flexibility with voting: 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.

- a. **Voting by Mail:** Voters may request a mail-in ballot up to 5:00 PM on November 4th at their County Board of Elections office, and if a voter does so they are required to complete a log. Voters may return their voted mail-in ballot to any County Board of Elections office, the State Board of Elections office, and any early voting site. Voters may fix (also known as "cure") issues with their mail-in ballot at the County Board of Elections office by November 14th
- b. **Assistance:** Multi-partisan Assistance Teams ("MAT") may assist any voter in requesting a mail-in ballot, serve as a witness to a mail-in ballot, or provide any other assistance a voter may need. voter who is disabled or is unable to read or write may receive assistance from any person of their choice.
- c. **Voter Photo ID:** If a voter does not have an acceptable form of photo ID, they may use an ID Exception Form with the reason "victim of a natural disaster." All mail-in ballots come with ID Exception Forms, and when voting in-person, poll workers are required to provide this option if a voter presents without ID.

**Tropical Storm Helene Disaster Legal Resources (Source: Legal Aid of NC):**

<https://legallaidnc.org/tropical-storm-helene-disaster-assistance/>

**Non-legal Volunteer Opportunities:** If you are looking for ways to volunteer this weekend, here's a list: <https://nc211.org/hurricane-helene-volunteer-opportunities/>.

