STATE OF WASHINGTON

August 21, 2026

SUBJECT: Wildfire Response: Information for health care and long-term care providers and partners

The wildfires across Washington have affected every part of the health care system. Communities have experienced devastating losses and disruptions, and responding to their needs will require all of us to work together.

The Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), Department of Health (DOH), and Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) have been coordinating our response since the beginning of this emergency and will continue collaborating to ensure efficient and effective support for wildfire-impacted health care entities and communities.

We know health care and long-term care providers are on the front lines of this response. Our goal is to provide as much flexibility as possible so you can continue caring for people during this emergency.

Available now
Governor Ferguson's Emergency Proclamation 26-03.1 provides temporary state-level authority to help providers respond to the emergency, including:

- Extending licensure renewal deadlines.
- Allowing medical assistants to provide services when their supervising provider is immediately available but not physically present.
- Giving hospitals additional flexibility to address staffing shortages.
- Allowing health care facilities and pharmacies to operate from alternative locations when needed.
- Temporarily easing certain requirements, such as allowing emergency admissions and capacity adjustments for adult family homes and assisted living facilities, so they can provide care and services to people displaced by the fires.

In response to the Governor's emergency proclamation, agencies have made the following changes:

- HCA ensured that all Apple Health (Medicaid) clients impacted by the wildfires have access to emergency refills and eliminated wait times for replacement durable medical equipment.
- DOH leveraged authorities provided under the Uniform Emergency Volunteer Health Practitioners Act to support rapid credentialing of out-of-state health care providers to assist in impacted jurisdictions.

- DSHS expanded eligibility for the Family Emergency Assistance Program (FEAP) to include individuals and families without children in counties affected by this wildfire emergency.
- DSHS sent mobile Community Service Office to the region to take applications for medical, food and cash assistance.
- DOH will release a notice to providers soon with additional details on extending licensure renewal deadlines.

What we've asked CMS to approve
With the formal Public Health Emergency Declaration granted by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), Washington expects to receive temporary changes that will provide additional flexibility in Medicaid and long-term care program rules retroactive to August 1, 2026, the date of the Public Health Emergency Declaration. These changes are intended to support people receiving services and supports in the community, including services provided through the Administration for Community Living, Area Agencies on Aging, and Developmental Disabilities Administration, and to support providers, hospitals, and facilities responding to the emergency. We will continue to share updates as they become available.

What providers should do
We will post updates, including information for Apple Health providers and providers serving dually eligible patients and individuals receiving long term services and support through DSHS, on HCA's wildfire response page. Providers should continue to check that webpage for the latest information.

Thank you for continuing to care for Washingtonians during this emergency. Your work is critical to helping people stay safe, maintain access to care, and begin recovering from these devastating fires.

Sincerely,

Angela Ramirez
Secretary
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services

Ryan Moran, DrPH, MHSA
Director
Washington State Health Care Authority

Dennis E. Worsham
Secretary of Health
Washington State Department of Health