



Guidance to School Districts for Enrolling Students Displaced by Hurricane Maria

As a result of the devastating effects of Hurricane Maria, students and families from Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands and other areas of the Caribbean have relocated to Florida. To ensure displaced students are able to continue their education, many school districts have already begun enrolling them and the Florida Virtual School has offered to accept 20,000 displaced students. Florida Commissioner of Education Pam Stewart has been in contact with Puerto Rico Secretary of Education Julia Keleher, and she expressed her great appreciation for Florida's support.

Due to the devastation left in the wake of these record-setting storms, some of these families may not have immediate access to the records that are typically required to enroll in school. Given these highly unusual circumstances, the Florida Department of Education has waived certain rules and regulatory provisions to enable districts to more seamlessly enroll displaced students. This document is a compilation of guidance; school district personnel should direct questions to the contacts for each section listed below.

I. Waivers

A [supplemental order](#) was issued by Commissioner Stewart on October 6, 2017. To the extent student records are unavailable as a result of Hurricane Maria, the following State Board of Education rules and related Florida Statutes are waived to allow school districts to enroll these displaced students in school without the necessary and customary documentation:

- Rules 6A-1.0985 and 6A-1.09941, Florida Administrative Code, to the extent necessary to allow Florida public school districts to admit such students where such records are unavailable to the parent or guardian of the student.
- Section 1003.21, Florida Statutes, to the extent it requires proof of age for attendance eligibility where such records are unavailable to the parent or guardian of the student.
- Section 1003.22, Florida Statutes, requiring presentation of a certification of a school-entry health examination where such records are unavailable to the parent or guardian of the student. Such statute shall be waived for initial enrollment of students.

The following State Board of Education rules and related Florida Statutes are waived to allow school districts to employ displaced teachers without the necessary and customary documentation for Educator Certification. The department is authorized, upon receiving a request from a school superintendent or his or her authorized designee or from a Florida nonpublic school with a state-approved professional education competence program to:

- Waive the application fee(s) for an initial educator certificate, pursuant to Section 1012.56(1), Florida Statutes, and Rule 6A-4.0012(1)(a), Florida Administrative Code, with requests not to exceed three (3) subject area coverages or endorsements, and
- Waive the requirement to provide official transcript(s) documenting receipt of a bachelor's or higher degree from an accredited or approved institution, pursuant to Section 1012.56(2)(c), Florida Statutes, and Rule 6A-4.0012(3), Florida Administrative Code, if the educator provides unofficial transcript(s) and, if applicable, copies of valid teaching certificate(s) issued by another state or U.S. territory.



For more information, refer to **Section X. Special Certification Provisions for Educators.**

II. Fall 2017 FTE Survey

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1. What is the process to guarantee displaced enrollees are counted and schools receive the accurate funding for the Fall 2017 FTE survey period?

[Rule 6A-1.0451](#), Florida Administrative Code, authorizes an alternate survey to be conducted within nine weeks of the regular survey. The alternate survey must be requested prior to the regular survey and may be requested on a district-wide basis, or for a specific school or schools. To be counted for funding, the alternate survey must result in an FTE student increase of 5 percent or more for the district, or 25 percent or more for a school. The regular survey must still be conducted, and the FTE amount from the alternate survey compared with the regular survey FTE to determine if the threshold was met. The approval to conduct an alternate survey does not require a district to conduct the alternate survey. In the event student enrollment does not increase as much as was anticipated at the time the request was made, the district may decide not to conduct the alternate survey.

For the current year, the regular student membership survey is scheduled for October 9-13, 2017, and the alternate survey must occur no later than December 11-15, 2017. The impact of alternate surveys will be known following incorporation of the alternate surveys in the third Florida Education Finance (FEFP) calculation in early January 2018.

Because of a hurricane, a district may not have been able to hold Individual Educational Plan (IEP) meetings as initially scheduled. The Commissioner of Education is authorized to extend the date by which an IEP meeting must be held so that the FTE reported for the student during survey week may be reported in the Exceptional Student Education Program, rather than in the basic program. This authorization is for student data reporting purposes only, and ensures that districts receive Exceptional Student Guaranteed Allocation funding for these students.

III. Class Size

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2. Is it possible to suspend occupancy limitations lower than the Certificate of Occupancy to accommodate increased demand for students?

The space and design criteria adopted by the State Board of Education would not preclude a district from absorbing additional students into existing buildings on a temporary basis. The occupancy requirements that would be at issue in response to a possible influx of students due to Hurricane Maria



would be found in the Florida Fire Prevention Code. The State Fire Marshal would be responsible for any requests for waiver of those requirements.

3. Will penalties for class size infractions in districts affected by the arrival of students from hurricane-affected areas be waived?

[Section 1003.03\(4\)\(c\)](#), Florida Statutes, authorizes the Commissioner of Education to recommend to the legislature an alternate reduction calculation if there is evidence that a district was unable to meet class size requirements despite appropriate efforts to do so, or because of an extreme emergency. As part of this calculation, the district's number of FTE students that exceeds the district's appropriated or projected FTE in the FEFP conference report are not included in the class size compliance penalty amount. Therefore, there is no penalty for these students.

The initial calculation for determining preliminary compliance with class size maximums will be determined from the student data residing on the data base following close of state processing on November 3, 2017. Districts may amend student data on the data base through December 15, 2017. Compliance with class size maximums will be determined from the student data residing on the data base following the close of state processing on December 15, 2017. The commissioner recommends the alternative reduction amount by February 15, 2018.

IV. Homeless Student Identification

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4. How are schools to determine if a displaced student is also homeless?

For all displaced children and youth, apply federal McKinney-Vento Act (MVA) criteria as you would for any student that may be experiencing homelessness. Ask all parents/guardians who are enrolling students to complete the district's Student Housing Questionnaire (it may have another name in some districts). Consult with the district's designated Homeless Liaison for assistance. For contact information, go to [https://app1.fldoe.org/flbpson/nclbchoice/bpsonDirectory/directory.aspx](https://app1.fldoe.org/flbпсо/nclbchoice/bpsonDirectory/directory.aspx), scroll down to select Homeless Contacts, select a district, and click Submit.

5. How are displaced enrollees to be coded in the data system?

For MVA-eligible hurricane-displaced students, complete the following data elements:

- Data Element #129525, Homeless Student, PK-12: as indicated
- Data Element #130275, Homeless Unaccompanied Youth: as indicated
- Data Element #129150, Homeless Cause: select H – Natural Disaster-Hurricane
- Data Element #131545, Disaster Affected Student: select Y – Yes, this student moved to this district this school year due to a hurricane

For hurricane-displaced students who are NOT MVA-eligible, complete the following data element:



- Data Element #131545, Disaster Affected Student: select Y – Yes, this student moved to this district this school year due to a hurricane

For all hurricane-displaced students who are coming from another state or territory, complete the following data element:

- Data Element 163166, Prior School/Location: State/Territory or Common Wealth: enter the standard two-character code for the state, territory or commonwealth (most likely: Texas (TX), Louisiana (LA), Puerto Rico (PR), U.S. Virgin Islands (VI))

V. Age Verification

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6. What documentation is acceptable for verification of age?

As per the supplemental order, proof of age documentation shall be waived for initial enrollment.

VI. Immunization Verification

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7. What immunization and school-entry health examination documentation will be required for enrollment?

As per the supplemental order, proof of age documentation shall be waived for initial enrollment. School districts are encouraged to work with their local health departments in developing procedures to expedite immunization and health examination requirements.

Florida Law, Rule & Guidelines:

- **[Section 1003.22, Florida Statutes](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1003/Sections/1003.22.html), School-entry health examinations; Immunization against communicable diseases; exemptions; duties of Department of Health.** Subsections (1) and (5) provide for a temporary exemption for 30 school days for children and youth who are experiencing homelessness at http://www.leg.state.fl.us/Statutes/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=1000-1099/1003/Sections/1003.22.html.
- **[Rule 64D-3.046, Florida Administrative Code](https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=64D-3.046), Immunization Requirements: Public and Nonpublic Schools, Grades Preschool, Kindergarten Through 12, and Adult Education Classes.** Subsection (4) allows for an authorized school official to issue a temporary exemption for students who are homeless at <https://www.flrules.org/gateway/ruleNo.asp?id=64D-3.046>.

- **[Immunization Guidelines: Florida Schools, Childcare Facilities and Family Daycare Homes](#)** - Pages 10 and 11 further address temporary exemptions for students who are homeless at <http://www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/immunization/children-and-adolescents/documents/school-guide.pdf>.

National Guidance Documents:

- **[Interim Immunization Recommendations for Individuals Displaced by a Disaster](https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/disease/vaccrecdisplaced.html)** - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides recommendations at <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/disease/vaccrecdisplaced.html> when immunization records are not available.
- **[Homeless Children and Youths Guidance](https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716updated0317.pdf)** - The U.S. Department of Education revised *Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance* (2017) at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716updated0317.pdf> in accordance with obligations under the McKinney-Vento Act. School immunization guidance is addressed on pages 1, 21, 24 and 26.

VII. Educational Placement

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8. How are schools to determine the educational placement of students when information is not available?

In the absence of educational records, the receiving district may place a student in an age-appropriate grade placement and monitor progress. Additionally, the district should provide instructional assessments to validate placement, skill development and English language proficiency. The district should provide interventions as appropriate based on assessment data.

9. What is the process to verify successful completion of middle grades courses and high school credits for secondary-level students?

If a student's records are not available, the receiving district may determine grade-level placement based upon the district's student progression plan.

[Rule 6A-1.09941](#), Florida Administrative Code, State Uniform Transfer of Students in Middle Grades and High School, establishes uniform procedures relating to the acceptance of transfer work and credit for students entering Florida's public schools.

(1) The procedures relating to the acceptance of transfer work and courses for students in middle grades 6, 7, and 8 from out of state or out of country shall be as follows:

(a) Grades earned and offered for acceptance shall be based on official transcripts and shall be

accepted at face value subject to validation if required by the receiving school's accreditation. If validation of the official transcript is deemed necessary, or if the student does not possess an official transcript or is a home education student, successful completion of courses shall be validated through performance during the first grading period as outlined in paragraph (1)(b), of this rule.

(b) Validation of courses shall be based on performance in classes at the receiving school. A student transferring into a school shall be placed at the appropriate sequential course level and should be passing each required course at the end of the first grading period. Students who do not meet this requirement shall have courses validated using the Alternative Validation Procedure, as outlined in paragraph (1)(c), of this rule.

(c) Alternative Validation Procedure. If validation based on performance as described above is not satisfactory, then any one of the following alternatives identified in the district student progression plan shall be used for validation purposes as determined by the teacher, principal and parent:

1. Portfolio evaluation by the superintendent or designee,
2. Demonstrated performance in courses taken at other public or private accredited schools,
3. Demonstrated proficiencies on nationally normed standardized subject area assessments,
4. Demonstrated proficiencies on a statewide, standardized assessment, or
5. Written review of the criteria utilized for a given subject provided by the former school.

(2) The procedures relating to the acceptance of transfer work and credits for students in high school from out of state or out of country shall be as follows:

(a) Credits and grades earned and offered for acceptance shall be based on official transcripts and shall be accepted at face value subject to validation if required by the receiving school's accreditation. If validation of the official transcript is deemed necessary, or if the student does not possess an official transcript or is a home education student, credits shall be validated through performance during the first grading period as outlined in paragraph (2)(b), of this rule. Assessment requirements for transfer students under Section 1003.4282, F.S., must be satisfied.

(b) Validation of credits shall be based on performance in classes at the receiving school. A student transferring into a school shall be placed at the appropriate sequential course level and should have a minimum grade point average of 2.0 at the end of the first grading period. Students who do not meet this requirement shall have credits validated using the Alternative Validation Procedure, as outlined in paragraph (2)(c), of this rule.

(c) Alternative Validation Procedure. If validation based on performance as described above is not satisfactory, then any one of the following alternatives shall be used for validation purposes as determined by the teacher, principal and parent:

1. Portfolio evaluation by the superintendent or designee,
2. Written recommendation by a Florida certified teacher selected by the parent and approved by the principal,
3. Satisfactory performance in courses taken through dual enrollment or at other public or private accredited schools,
4. Satisfactory performance on nationally normed standardized subject area assessments,
5. Satisfactory performance on a statewide, standardized assessment, or
6. Written review of the criteria utilized for a given subject provided by the former school.

Students must be provided at least ninety (90) days from date of transfer to prepare for assessments outlined in subparagraphs (1)(c)3., and 4. and (2)(c)4. and 5., of this rule if required.

In addition, [section 1003.433](#), Florida Statutes, Learning opportunities for out-of-state and out-of-country transfer students and students needing additional instruction to meet high school graduation

requirement, specifies the following:

(1) Students who enter a Florida public school at the 11th or 12th grade from out of state or out of country shall not be required to spend additional time in a Florida public school in order to meet the high school course requirements if the student has met all requirements of the school district, state, or country from which he or she is transferring. Such students who are not proficient in English should receive immediate and intensive instruction in English language acquisition. However, to receive a standard high school diploma, a transfer student must earn a 2.0 grade point average and meet the requirements under s. [1008.22](#).

(2) Students who earn the required 24 credits for the standard high school diploma except for passage of any must-pass assessment under s. [1003.4282](#) or s. [1008.22](#) or an alternate assessment by the end of grade 12 must be provided the following learning opportunities:

(a) Participation in an accelerated high school equivalency diploma preparation program during the summer.

(b) Upon receipt of a certificate of completion, be allowed to take the College Placement Test and be admitted to developmental education or credit courses at a Florida College System institution, as appropriate.

(c) Participation in an adult general education program as provided in s. [1004.93](#) for such time as the student requires to master English, reading, mathematics, or any other subject required for high school graduation. A student attending an adult general education program shall have the opportunity to take any must-pass assessment under s. [1003.4282](#) or s. [1008.22](#) an unlimited number of times in order to receive a standard high school diploma.

(3) Students who have been enrolled in an ESOL program for less than 2 school years and have met all requirements for the standard high school diploma except for passage of any must-pass assessment under s. [1003.4282](#) or s. [1008.22](#) or alternate assessment may receive immersion English language instruction during the summer following their senior year. Students receiving such instruction are eligible to take the required assessment or alternate assessment and receive a standard high school diploma upon passage of the required assessment or alternate assessment. This subsection shall be implemented to the extent funding is provided in the General Appropriations Act.

VIII. Exceptional Student Education

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10. What procedures should be followed for students who have disabilities?

To the extent possible, follow existing procedures regarding transfer students from outside Florida according to [Rule 6A-6.0334](#), Florida Administrative Code. If records are not available, accept and document the parent/guardian's statement that the student is a student with a disability. Based upon the information available, determine the most appropriate placement and program, obtain parental consent for services, develop an individual educational plan (IEP) and provide services as soon as possible. Monitor the student's progress, proceed with consent for initial evaluations and eligibility procedures, and provide the parent with procedural safeguards.

IX. English Language Learners

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11. What services should be provided to English Language Learners (ELLs)?

Answering yes on the Home Language Survey would require a local entry English language proficiency assessment to determine if English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services are needed. If so, the student is placed accordingly with a teacher having or working toward ESOL training/certification and using ESOL strategies in the classroom. For English language arts, an out-of-field letter must be sent to parents or guardians in a language they can understand.

All ELLs must take the ACCESS for ELLs 2.0 summative assessment, which occurs in the spring semester. The department is in communication with the WIDA assessment consortium regarding assessment protocols and flexibility for districts who may need to order additional assessment materials.

Although some students from Puerto Rico will be proficient in English, many will not. Since all students will be expected to take Florida assessments, teaching English listening, speaking, reading and writing skills is imperative. Districts can provide school and extended day opportunities for students to learn English through language acquisition software and translation websites. Ensuring ELLs learn academic content during this difficult transition period requires native language support through paraprofessionals, teachers and all bilingual staff. Instructional materials, including bilingual resources and audio books, may be provided in Spanish if available, but comprehension in English is still necessary to attain satisfactory levels on assessments. In addition to educational support, many of our Puerto Rican students will need extra time to process academic information, as well as cultural mores. School staff should also ensure that students, parents and guardians are familiar with district attendance, graduation and behavioral policies to ensure successful transition to Florida public schools.

X. Special Certification Provisions for Educators

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12. What materials must be provided by educators displaced from a U.S. territory applying for an Educator's Certificate to teach in a Florida school system?

To apply for a Florida Educator's Certificate, any educator displaced from a U.S. territory must provide the following through a Florida school system employer to be evaluated for certificate eligibility:

- A completed CG-10 application form;
- Official transcripts showing all degrees and credits earned, if available (see question 14); and
- Copies of valid teaching certificate(s) from other U.S. states or territories, if applicable (see question 15).

13. Will educators displaced from a U.S. territory be required to pay application processing fees to the Bureau of Educator Certification?

No. After an educator displaced from a U.S. territory attains employment in a Florida school system, the employer may submit a request for the Bureau of Educator Certification to waive the certification fee for his/her initial application for a Florida Educator's Certificate. The Bureau of Educator Certification will provide Florida school employers the appropriate form to request this fee waiver (see question 16).

14. What if the educator does not have access to official transcripts from his college/university?

An educator displaced from a U.S. territory who attains employment in a Florida school system may submit unofficial copies of his/her transcripts with his/her completed application for evaluation by the Bureau of Educator Certification. However, prior to issuance of a Florida Professional Certificate, the educator must provide his/her official transcripts showing all degrees and credits earned to the Bureau of Educator Certification. The Bureau of Educator Certification will provide Florida school employers the appropriate form to request this waiver (see question 16).

15. May an educator displaced from a U.S. territory be evaluated based on reciprocity?

An educator may submit a copy of his/her valid teaching certificate issued by another U.S. state or territory to be evaluated based on reciprocity. The certificate shall be:

- The standard educator's certificate issued by the U.S. state or territory, comparable to a Florida Professional Certificate;
- Issued in a subject comparable to a Florida certification subject;
- The same or higher level of academic training required for certification in the comparable subject in Florida; and
- Currently valid (not expired, suspended or revoked).

16. What must a Florida school system do to verify employment of an educator displaced from a U.S. territory and request issuance of a Florida educator certificate?

To verify employment of an educator displaced from a U.S. territory, the Florida school system employer must provide the following to the Bureau of Educator Certification:

- A completed CG-10 application form;
- Official transcripts showing all degrees and credits earned, if available (see question 14);
- Copies of valid teaching certificate(s) from other U.S. states or territories, if applicable (see question 15);
- A completed Initial Certificate Fee Waiver Request Form (see attached Waiver2017 form); and
- A completed Issue Request form with fingerprint results.

XI. Student and Teacher Support

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17. What type of supports need to be made available to displaced students who may be experiencing behavioral/emotional trauma resulting from their experiences?

We know that children experience the impact and aftermath of traumatic events differently than adults. Your student services staff (counselors, school psychologists, social workers, nurses) can be a valuable resource to teachers as student issues are identified. Increased awareness of presenting behaviors should be monitored and brought to your school problem-solving team. Encourage your schools to have a plan for welcoming/orienting these new students. It is important to develop a coordinated system to respond to ongoing escalating behaviors.

The Student Support Services Project website offers a collection of resources for student services staff to assist with outreach and support of families and school staff. To view these resources, please visit <http://sss.usf.edu/resources/topic/emergency/hurricane.html>.

For bilingual resources related to hurricane recover for educators and families, see: <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/helping-children-after-natural-disaster>.

18. What type of supports should be made available to current students and staff who have been impacted by hurricanes?

We understand that many of your students and staff have family and friends who are suffering the effects of recent hurricanes. Please urge your school staff to provide supportive counseling to the impacted students and school site staff and/or families, and refer to a counseling professional as needed.

“[After the Storm: A Guide to Help Children Cope with the Psychological Effects of a Hurricane](#)” is a workbook designed by the University of Miami to assist adults and children to cope with the psychological trauma caused by a hurricane. See <http://www.hcps.org/f/aboutus/afterthestorm.pdf>.

There are two “just-in-time” resources from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

- For more information on helping children adjust to new location after a natural disaster, see the NASP [Natural Disaster](#) resource page at <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/natural-disaster>.
- The NASP [School Safety & Crisis](#) resource page offers many resources, including addressing grief and trauma. See <http://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis>.

As we identify resources that may be helpful, we will include them on the Student Services Project website (<http://sss.usf.edu>) under resources/crisis intervention.

XII. Statewide Assessment Schedule

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19. Will the statewide assessment schedule be altered?

When we know full effect of this year's hurricane season, we will address any needed changes to the statewide assessment schedule.