

Standing strong with Western North Carolina

Recovery is well underway across Western North Carolina following Hurricane Helene. From immediate relief to long-term recovery efforts, significant strides have been made, and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (Blue Cross NC) continues to stand with its members and communities in the region.

While progress is evident, the path to full recovery is ongoing, and Blue Cross NC is here for the long haul.

“Our north star, our purpose, is to improve health for all and ensure that people get care when they need it,” said Colleen Briggs, President of the Blue Cross NC Foundation and Vice President of Corporate Responsibility at Blue Cross NC. “That commitment doesn’t waver with time or circumstance. We’re here for Western North Carolina – for as long as takes.”

Responding to our community partners

- Blue Cross NC, Healthy Blue, and the Blue Cross NC Foundation have committed more than \$6.8 million to 71 organizations for Hurricane Helene relief. This has supported both immediate needs following the disaster as well as long-term recovery efforts.
- Our company has donated more than 140,000 much needed supplies to the region, including diapers, cleaning supplies, and medication.
- Our employees have donated more than 43,000 supplies, contributed more than \$57,000 in employee directed donations, and volunteered their time in support of Hurricane Helene relief efforts.

Helping Blue Cross NC members get the care they need

We allowed early prescription refills, extended timelines for premium payments, and made it easier for members to see available providers, even if they were out of network.

- We provided telehealth resources for members who weren’t able to see a doctor in person and helped those in Western North Carolina connect with mental health resources.
- Blue Cross NC and Healthy Blue prioritized outreach to members with critical health needs in the wake of the disaster, ensuring continuity of care and access to essential supplies.

Continued Western North Carolina disaster response

The Blue Cross NC Foundation is furthering our response by supporting local organizations working on the ground responding to ongoing community needs. Earlier this year, a new phase of recovery support was launched. Building on initial emergency response efforts in the immediate aftermath of the storm, this next phase, shaped by support from local partners, focuses on short-term needs and longer-term resilience by supporting emergency feeding, farm recovery, youth mental health, and access to care.

Since April 2025, the Blue Cross NC Foundation has awarded nearly 30 grants to organizations working to rebuild infrastructure, restore services, and strengthen community well-being across the region.

Community spotlights

Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)

ASAP is a trusted local food systems leader serving 23 mountain counties. In the wake of Hurricane Helene, which damaged 86 percent of farms in the region, ASAP responded by launching a farmer relief grant program and increasing fresh food access for residents in need. Grant funding is helping expand its nutrition security initiatives, including Double SNAP and produce prescriptions. Its Appalachian Farms Feeding Families (AFFF) program connected 28 early childhood centers and 36 restaurants with local farms, supporting over 50 farms and hundreds of families and workers.

- We proactively contacted members receiving dialysis, on home oxygen, and those awaiting transplants to confirm their care plans and address any urgent needs.
- We also reached out to pregnant members in their third trimester to ensure they had safe delivery plans and access to necessary support. For those who had recently given birth, we followed up to confirm safe discharge plans for both mother and baby, especially in cases where returning home was not an option.

Solutions spotlight: FastMed™ clinics support Western North Carolina

FastMed urgent care centers are vital access points for care across the state, particularly in rural areas and in times of crisis.

When Hurricane Helene struck, FastMed clinics across Western North Carolina were hit hard. Buildings were damaged, power and water were lost, and communication was limited. Despite major logistical challenges, FastMed teams found ways to reopen. They secured generator power, brought in water and sanitation systems, arranged for medical waste disposal, and staffed clinics in areas with limited cell service and ongoing outages.

- Clinics in Boone, Lenoir, Hickory, and Wilkesboro remained open as scheduled. The Hendersonville clinic reopened just days after the storm, easing pressure on local hospitals.
- The Asheville clinic, located in flooded Biltmore Village, reopened within a week to support frontline recovery efforts. The Candler clinic was featured in an [NBC news story](#), where a local mother called it a “blessing” after her son needed urgent care due to contaminated water.

“It is a blessing to have the urgent care very close to our house and be able to get the help you need,” she said.

Progress in motion

Recovery across Western North Carolina is well underway, and Blue Cross NC remains deeply engaged in the region. Addressing the needs of our members and communities is not just a responsibility; it’s our purpose. We remain committed to listening to, learning from, and working alongside local organizations and community members to ensure a resilient recovery.

North Carolina Community Health Center Association (NCCHCA)

NCCHCA supports 43 community health centers statewide, including nine in Western North Carolina directly impacted by Helene played a critical role in supporting the immediate health needs of the region. They worked to reopen quickly, provided care in shelters, and distributed essential supplies. NCCHCA coordinated emergency funding, supplies, and Medicaid payments, and launched a Disaster Relief Fund for impacted centers. The latest grant from the Blue Cross NC Foundation is helping to rebuild clinics, support staff, and expand mental health services, helping ensure long-term recovery in the area.

AMY (Avery, Mitchell, Yancey) Wellness Foundation

AMY Wellness Foundation supports community well-being in Avery, Mitchell, and Yancey counties. Following Hurricane Helene, AMY deployed rapid-response grants and helped form county-level recovery groups to support health care access, emergency food distribution, housing and small business repairs, and nonprofit infrastructure. With new funding from the Blue Cross NC Foundation, AMY is advancing long-term recovery and resilience efforts, including infrastructure restoration, emergency preparedness, agricultural recovery, and direct support for families still impacted by the storm. Holistically, funding will support efforts to help close persistent gaps in disaster recovery, mental health services, nutrition and housing instability, and nonprofit capacity. These investments are building resilience to future disasters and laying the foundation for a healthier, more connected AMY region.