

Puerto Rico, Federal Government, and Voluntary Agencies Unite to Address Health and Medical Needs

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SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico – The Government of Puerto Rico, the Federal Government, and voluntary organizations are combining efforts to ensure life sustaining relief and medical care is available to survivors of Hurricane Maria. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has more than 500 personnel from the National Disaster Medical System (NDMS) and U.S. Public Health Service (USPHS) deployed to Puerto Rico. These medical personnel are providing care in 13 locations throughout Puerto Rico, delivering care to survivors where hospital facilities are overwhelmed or unavailable. HHS medical teams provide emergency care tailored to the specific needs of each location, ranging from primary and acute care to triage, resuscitation and stabilization. They also can prepare patients for evacuation, if needed. Each team may include physicians, nurses, medical technicians, and ancillary support personnel.

These personnel also are providing basic medical care in federal medical stations set up in existing facilities as medical shelters for patients and their families.

The Department of Defense (DOD) and the United States Coast Guard are leveraging land, air, and seaborne assets to provide rescue operations, delivery of medical supplies and transport of patients located in isolated communities in need of specialized care.

When critical care patients need levels of care beyond what is available at a local hospital or clinic, the hospital or clinic contacts the medical coordinating centers (MCCs). The MCCs may request that DOD evacuate the patient to another medical institution that can provide the appropriate level of care. The patient could be transferred to another hospital capable of providing medical care, the Army support hospital in Humacao, the Air Force Expeditionary Medical Support field hospital in Aguadilla, or the ship USNS Comfort.

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) coordinated with FEMA, HHS, and



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volunteer organizations to deploy mobile medical centers, pharmaceuticals, counseling units, and 196 volunteers to address the health needs of the nation's veterans in Puerto Rico.

In addition, the HHS Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) are utilizing epidemiological testing equipment and treatment options to help protect survivors from the spread of harmful health threats, communicable diseases, and from hazardous environmental conditions.

Multiple voluntary organizations such as the American Red Cross and AmeriCares have teamed up with Puerto Rico's Departamento de Salud, Centro Medico, and HHS to provide a continuous flow of medical supplies and patient care support.

Survivor access to medical care and health services remains paramount.

Disaster Medical Assistance Teams support HIMA-San Pablo hospital in Fajardo after Hurricane

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FEMA's mission is to support our citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.

Disaster recovery assistance is available without regard to race, color, religion, nationality, sex, age, disability, English proficiency or economic status. If you or someone you know has been discriminated against, call FEMA toll-free at 800-621-3362 (voice, 711/VRS - Video Relay Service; TTY: 800-462-7585).

Multilingual operators are available (press 2 for Spanish).

The SBA is the federal government's primary source of money for the long-term rebuilding of disaster-damaged property. SBA helps businesses of all sizes, private non-profit organizations, homeowners and renters, which can cover the cost of replacing lost or disaster-damaged real estate and personal property. These disaster loans cover losses not fully compensated by insurance or other recoveries and do not duplicate benefits of other agencies or organizations.

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