

Back@Home North Carolina
North Carolina Housing Finance Agency
Special Needs Housing: Combating Homelessness

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In less than two years, North Carolina was hit twice by “500-year storms”: Hurricane Matthew in 2016 and Hurricane Florence in 2018. These storms devastated eastern North Carolina, a region already lacking affordable housing stock before back-to-back hurricanes destroyed much of what did exist. Extensive wind damage and flooding from Hurricane Florence sent more than 22,000 North Carolinians to seek refuge at disaster shelters. Most households were able to leave these shelters and return home by accessing FEMA or other types of assistance. However, hundreds of displaced North Carolinians were ineligible for FEMA assistance and at risk of becoming homeless.

Homelessness is often exacerbated by natural disasters. After Hurricane Katrina, 12,000 people were left homeless in New Orleans.¹ Back@Home North Carolina was created to provide a clear path into housing for disaster survivors that, if not for this assistance, would become homeless. By connecting disaster survivors to resources and services, the program prevents homelessness by enabling housing stability and long-term self-sufficiency. Back@Home North Carolina was designed to fill a housing gap for disaster victims by replicating a cost-effective rapid rehousing model that had been implemented in Houston, Texas, following Hurricane Harvey in 2017. This program is innovative due to its use of diverse housing partners throughout the State of North Carolina, while the Houston program only used the housing services of one public housing authority. Tailored toward the unique needs of North Carolinians, Back@Home North Carolina’s use of existing resources has transformed a city-wide model into a permanent, statewide model with the objective of combatting homelessness for survivors of natural disasters.

Program Description

Back@Home North Carolina began in October 2018 as a \$12 million initiative, seeded by philanthropic and government funding, to benefit individuals affected by Hurricane Florence who resided in counties with a federal declaration of disaster. These individuals did not qualify for FEMA Individual Assistance and either resided in a disaster shelter with no safe, stable housing option upon exit or were at risk of homelessness.

Through housing navigation services, short-term rental and utility assistance, and case management, Back@Home North Carolina provides a stable platform for the state to recover from the hurricane and increase resiliency to future disasters. The program used an existing resource, the Emergency Solutions Grant program, to develop a framework of housing-focused case management services. Back@Home North Carolina also offers a Housing Stabilization Fund to assist families with smaller-scale, one-time needs that would have otherwise prevented them from securing safe and stable housing (e.g. utility deposits, job placement, credit repair services, moving expenses, small-scale housing rehabilitation and modification, or rental arrearages). Households interested in the program must contact NC 2-1-1, a statewide 24/7 information and referral service provided by the United Way of North Carolina, to complete an assessment. If eligible, the household is then referred to one of four rehousing agencies that locate and place program participants into apartments that meet HUD Housing Quality Standards.

¹ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2009, September). Natural Disasters and Homelessness. Available at <https://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Natural-Disasters-and-Homelessness-Fact-Sheet-2009.pdf>

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Outcomes from the Housing for Harvey program in Houston, from which Back@Home North Carolina was modeled, show promise for this model of disaster housing assistance. One year later, 87% of the 334 households who participated in Housing for Harvey had a positive exit at the end of the program, 5% had a negative exit, and 8% had a neutral exit.

Partnerships

Back@Home North Carolina is a partnership of state and local agencies. The program is administered by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) in partnership with the NC Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH), the NC Housing Finance Agency (NCHFA) and other state agencies and community partners. Immediately following Hurricane Florence, NCCEH brought the gap in disaster emergency housing to the attention of Governor Roy Cooper. NC DHHS and NCHFA were brought in to help execute this initiative due to the agencies' prior experience collaboratively administering housing programs across the state such as the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing, Key Rental Assistance and Transitions to Community Living Voucher programs.

After NCCEH, NCHFA, and NCDHHS were selected as lead agencies, Back@Home North Carolina quickly moved into the implementation phase. Leaders from the three agencies had daily phone calls to determine roles and responsibilities for each partner to ensure the successful implementation of this program. NCHFA leveraged its experience administering financial assistance, as well as its existing partnership with NCDHHS, and agreed to act as a paying agent on behalf of NCDHHS to reimburse rapid rehousing partners for housing navigation and rent-related expenses. NCHFA uses the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) to verify, collect, and track required documentation for these expenses. NCHFA leveraged its existing relationship with Socialserve, the nonprofit manager of NCHousingSearch.com, an online, searchable database of affordable rental housing across the state, to provide a private inventory of Back@Home North Carolina units for rehousing agencies, as well as surveys of participating landlords for program evaluation purposes.

NCDHHS administers the federal Emergency Solutions Grant program and has decades of experience implementing state and federal homelessness programs, making it well-positioned to administer Back@Home North Carolina. Its responsibilities include: developing program guidelines; coordinating all partners to ensure efficient and effective use of each partner's skills, staff and resources; contracting with and arranging payment for HQS inspections of potential units; and gathering data and reporting on program metrics, goals and disbursements. NCDHHS also established monitoring procedures to ensure compliance with the program guidelines and that funds are used for eligible activities. The final lead agency, NCCEH, works with communities to end homelessness by developing and implementing data-driven strategies that are focused on permanent housing. NCCEH uses its existing relationships and experience working with housing and service providers and recruits private landlords to participate in the program.

Building on effective partnerships, existing resources and best practices has led Back@Home North Carolina to already show successful outcomes within the first months of implementation.

Outcomes

Rapid rehousing programs like Back@Home North Carolina have been shown to have better outcomes, both in terms of cost-effectiveness and participants' wellbeing, than other homelessness programs such

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as transitional housing or emergency shelter. Recent Urban Institute research shows that rapid rehousing produces a savings of about \$4,000 per household—10% less than the cost of usual care.² Hurricane Florence struck in September and by the end of November, Back@Home North Carolina had housed 283 people in 131 households. Of these households, 46 (35%) received Housing Navigation and Case Management services only, while 85 (65%) received Rental Assistance in addition to Navigation and Case Management. Back@Home North Carolina is projected to assist 350 households that were assessed in disaster shelters as well as 2,000 or more households that will be served through the Housing Stabilization Fund.

Conclusion

The trauma felt by natural disaster survivors when they become displaced from housing should not be compounded with the experience of homelessness. Back@Home North Carolina is the only available resource specifically funded for survivors to obtain housing services when they are unable to access FEMA assistance. Back@Home North Carolina's success to date shows that a rapid rehousing model is replicable, scalable to the state level and belongs in the disaster recovery toolkit to help combat homelessness.

² Batko, S. & Cunningham, C. (2018, October). Rapid Rehousing's Role in Responding to Homelessness: What the Evidence Says. Urban Institute: Metropolitan Housing and Communities Center.



BACK@HOME

NORTH CAROLINA



We worked hard to ensure no one was left out in the storm.

Now it's time to ensure no one is left out in finding a new home.

More than 22,000 North Carolinians sought refuge at disaster shelters during Hurricane Florence and the devastating flooding that followed. Most people have gone back home and some have had to find a new place to live.

As communities in Southeastern North Carolina recover from the storm and the disaster shelters have closed, there is not a clear path back to housing for many of the most vulnerable storm survivors.

Back@Home creates that path back to housing so we don't leave anyone out.

[LEARN MORE →](#)



Ensuring Housing Stability for Storm Survivors.

[GIVE HELP →](#)

What does **HOME** mean to you?

How do you make a **HOUSE** feel like a home?

How does it feel to sleep in your **OWN BED**?



About

More than 22,000 North Carolinians sought refuge at disaster shelters during Hurricane Florence and the devastating flooding that followed. The last of the disaster shelters closed November 9, 2018. Most households were able to leave the shelters and return home, many accessing FEMA and other assistance.

Based on experience in past disasters, most recently Hurricane Matthew, we knew that a new resource was needed for those at risk of becoming homeless with no access to other disaster resources and no clear path out of disaster shelters. Back@Home North Carolina is designed to fill this gap by using a cost-effective rapid rehousing model and precedent set by Houston, TX and Puerto Rico.

During the program's first month of operating, Back@Home housed 100 people from disaster shelters. Now that the disaster shelters are closed, Back@Home is continuing to house individuals and families that were affected by Hurricane Florence and are currently experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

How It Works

Housing Navigation Assistance

ASSISTANCE TO LOCATE A NEW HOME

- Recruit landlords to provide housing opportunities for individuals and families.
- Identify and select a rental property based on a household's unique needs (e.g. accessible units), preferences, and financial resources.
- Address issues that may impede a household's access to housing (such as credit history, arrears, and legal issues).
- Help individuals and families negotiate manageable and appropriate lease agreements with landlords.



Rent and Move-In Assistance

SHORT-TERM FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO MOVE IN TO A NEW HOME

- Provide Financial Assistance to cover move-in costs, deposits, and the rental and/or utility assistance (typically six months or less) necessary to allow individuals and families to move immediately and to stabilize in permanent housing.
- Supply Move-In Kits for the essentials— mattresses, pillows, bedding, towels, and food boxes— at lease signing so families can move in right away.
- Supply additional Move-In Kits of furniture and household goods.



Give Help

You can help disaster survivors who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Join us in ensuring that everyone returns to a safe and stable home.



Become a Back@Home Landlord

Back@Home needs landlords in the disaster-declared counties who are willing to lease to participating families.

Back@Home provides short-term rental assistance and case management to help households get back into housing while they address other parts of their lives that were disrupted by the storm.

To hear more about the program and sign up to be a part of Back@Home, please contact Socialserve.com.

[EMAIL SOCIALSERVE.COM](mailto:EMAIL.SOCIALSERVE.COM) -->



Make a Financial Contribution

Back@Home is a partnership that uses public and private dollars to rehouse families and ensure they have the necessities to re-establish their home. Back@Home was created to fill gaps in disaster assistance. There were just too many stories of families falling through the cracks of existing programs. Because the program is aimed at filling gaps, situations often come up that aren't eligible for the different funding streams we use to rehouse families. Your contribution helps to make sure that we have flexible funding to meet the differing needs.

Private donations for Back@Home are being accepted by the North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness.

[DONATE](#) -->



Spread the Word.

Support Back@Home by talking about Back@Home with your friends, family, and coworkers. Share our webpage. Share a story. Encourage others to donate by [holding your own fundraiser](#) or [sharing our donation page](#).

With your help, we can recruit more landlords, raise additional funds, reach more families, and show leaders that a disaster rehousing program has the public's support.

Join the conversation online by using [#BackAtHomeNC](#) and [#EndHomelessnessNC](#) on twitter, instagram, and facebook.

GET HELP

Back@Home Teams are currently accepting referrals. If you think you might be eligible, call 2-1-1 to complete an assessment and ask about other recovery resources.

We know there are many people looking for assistance and we know that for people living in uncertainty, help cannot come soon enough.

Back@Home was designed to ensure that households that aren't eligible for other assistance aren't left out.

Is Back@Home the right program for you?

If you answer yes to these ALL of the questions below, you might be eligible for Back@Home assistance:

- Because of Hurricane Florence, you were forced to leave your home (or the place you were staying temporarily)
- You currently have no housing and reside in the disaster area
- You are currently staying in a shelter, sleeping in a car or outside, or you don't know where you'll sleep next week

Call 2-1-1 to complete an assessment for Back@Home and inquire about additional resources.



Additional Resources

You can see the latest counties that are under major disaster declaration in North Carolina on the [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) website](#)

Below is a list of resources last updated 10/3/2018.

FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY (FEMA) BENEFITS

Additional resources to assist households with registration and FEMA assistance include:

[DisasterAssistance.gov fact sheet](#)

[Disaster Survivor Application Checklist](#)

[North Carolina Department of Public Safety webpage on Individual Assistance Program](#)

Additional related resources:

[FEMA's Hurricane Florence Main Page and Email Subscription](#)

[Individual Assistance Information Fact Sheet](#)

[Post-FEMA Registration Benefits](#)

[Financial disaster Aid for US Citizens, Non-Citizen Nationals, and Qualified Aliens](#)

[Transitional Shelter Assistance Fact Sheet](#)

[Disaster Case Management](#)

[FEMA Benefits for Immigrants and Tenants in English and Spanish \(NC Justice Center\)](#)



Back@Home North Carolina

by North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness

\$11,357 of \$50,000

29 Donors



MAKE A DONATION



\$ 25

APPLICATION
FEE

\$25

Pays for a family's application fee for a new apartment.



\$ 50

DINNERWARE
FOR SIX

\$50

Provides dishes to be used at every meal. This includes plates, bowls, mugs, glasses, and silverware.



\$ 125

WELCOME
BASKET

\$125

Send a welcome basket to a family in their new home. This basket covers all the basics-- toilet paper, paper towels, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo, conditioner, soap, cleaning supplies, and laundry detergent.



\$ 500

CHILD'S
BEDROOM

\$500

Provides a child with a safe space to sleep! The child's bedroom kit includes a twin mattress and bedframe, dresser, lamps, curtains, and new bedding of the child's choosing!



\$1,700