

## Exchange enrollment extended in counties ravaged by hurricane until February 20

**THE PULSE** December 28, 2018 [Andy Miller](#) 0

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Federal health officials have extended the enrollment deadline for people in South Georgia affected by Hurricane Michael. They can enroll in the Affordable Care Act exchange till Feb. 20. Floridians affected by the storm also have an extended sign-up period. South Georgians who seek assistance from navigators can call 888-230-7772, or they can get federal help at 1-800-318-2596.

The national deadline was Dec. 15 to enroll in 2019 coverage.



At least 20 counties in Georgia will be eligible for the special enrollment period. They are Baker, Calhoun, Clay, Crisp, Decatur, Dougherty, Early, Grady, Laurens, Lee, Miller, Mitchell, Randolph, Seminole, Sumter, Terrell, Thomas, Tift, Turner, and Worth.

Residents can get help with enrollment from navigators, ACA insurance counselors, said Kathleen Connors of the group Georgia Refugee Health and Mental Health, which runs the state's navigator program.

"We plan to launch a very vigorous campaign" in the affected counties, Connors said. She added that her organization will work with hospitals, political leaders, places of worship and media to reach out to South Georgia consumers.

After a late surge, Georgia's enrollment figure in the exchange at the deadline was 460,139, about 4 percent lower than the total reached the year before. The slight year-to-year drop in the state was in line with national enrollment trends.

The exchange, created by the ACA, was designed for people who don't have access to employer insurance or government coverage, such as Medicare and Medicaid.

Michael hit Southwest Georgia hard in October, It was the first Category 3 hurricane to make a direct hit on the state in more than a century, meteorologists said.



Albany damage

The storm devastated cotton, pecan, timber and vegetable crops in Georgia. Gov. Nathan Deal called a special session in which the Georgia Legislature allocated \$270 million toward hurricane relief and \$200 million in income tax credits to timber and pecan farmers for replanting trees they lost.

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