



## Commonwealth of Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Public Health Nurses Return from Hurricane Relief in North Carolina

*\*Attention editors: An attached photo features the nurse strike team members who traveled to North Carolina as part of the state's emergency response for Hurricane Florence. They are standing with a North Carolina Army National Guard helicopter crew member who flew the team into a disaster area. Featured left to right are North Carolina Army National Guard crew member; Angela Kik, Department for Public Health (DPH); Christopher Smith, Lexington-Fayette County Health Department; Rachel Harrison, Bracken County Health Department; Sherita Hall, Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness; Charlene Woodard, Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness; Sandy Glover, DPH; Stephanie Carpenter, Lexington-Fayette County Health Department; Heather Toews, Lexington-Fayette County Health Department; Shelley Wood, Department for Insurance; Rebecca Hardin, DPH; and Nancy Hamilton, DPH.*

**FRANKFORT, Ky. (Sep. 23, 2018)** – A Nurse “Strike Team” from Kentucky has returned from North Carolina where they worked in emergency shelters housing residents displaced by Hurricane Florence. The team was in North Carolina for about nine days.

“We are very proud of each member of our nurse strike team who volunteered to be on the frontlines of this disaster response,” said Jeffrey Howard, Jr., M.D., Commissioner of Department for Public Health (DPH). “The role of nurses in disaster relief is critical and Kentucky nurses have a long history of supporting relief efforts by providing a high level of compassionate care that is so desperately needed for those affected by disasters like Hurricane Florence.”

Kentucky’s Nurse Strike Team consisted of nine registered nurses and two administrative staff members from the Bracken County Health Department, Department of Insurance, DPH, Lexington-Fayette County Health Department, and Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness.

“Helping the displaced people of North Carolina was both satisfying and humbling,” said Sherita Hall, nurse at Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness. “Our group displayed excellent team work and humility and we definitely made a mark. The residents of North Carolina were warm and kind despite their situation and we made some friends there for life. I am thankful for this opportunity and looking forward to helping others again.”

The strike team augmented staff to provide medical support to people who were displaced from their homes and were residing in general and medical needs shelters. The individuals housed in the medical support shelters had medical needs and were in relatively stable condition but had a chronic disease or condition such as diabetes or required oxygen or dialysis. Nurses conducted history and physical exams, provided patient assessments, assisted with medicine administration and provided general nursing care and comfort for these individuals.

“Everyone always thinks they know what to expect when preparations are being completed for a mission of this nature,” concluded said Angela Kik, Nurse Strike Team Leader at DPH. “While we knew we would be in a shelter caring for displaced residents, working long hours and eating shelter food, we were totally unprepared for what we received from the shelter residents and shelter workers. We became a family and the love and compassion that was shown towards our team from those who had lost everything was amazing.”

Assistance requests are coordinated and authorized through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC), which is a mutual aid agreement between states and territories in the United States. It enables states to share resources during natural and man-made disasters. Under EMAC agreements, the requesting state reimburses all associated costs incurred by the provider state. Kentucky Emergency Management (KYEM) is the managing authority for deployment of all Kentucky teams and assets.

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The Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) is home to most of the state's human services and healthcare programs, including the Department for Medicaid Services, the Department for Community Based Services the Department for Public Health, the Department for Aging and Independent Living and the Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities. CHFS is one of the largest agencies in state government, with nearly 8,000 full- and part-time employees located across the Commonwealth focused on improving the lives and health of Kentuckians.

