

Dear Educator:

The U.S. Department of Education (Department) is working hard to assist those areas affected by Hurricane Michael. Our immediate concern is for the safety and well-being of all who are affected by this hurricane, particularly those who have suffered the loss of their homes, schools and businesses, and must deal with displacement and trauma. President Trump has directed Federal agencies to work together to remove barriers and to expedite the work necessary to recover from Michael and its impact. To that end, senior leadership at the Department reached out to States under threat from Hurricane Michael prior to its landfall, and the Department continues to work closely with other Federal, State and local agencies to help with recovery efforts.

The first steps in a successful recovery are to assess each State's needs and to relieve burdens for students, families and educational institutions in Florida, Georgia and Alabama, as well as other States that may receive displaced students or be otherwise impacted. To assist you in this process, the Department is providing the attached initial guidance that explains available waivers from Federal requirements in certain Department programs and other potential forms of relief. This guidance provides State educational agencies, local educational agencies, Bureau of Indian Education-funded schools, postsecondary institutions and other Department grantees and program participants, including charter schools and nonpublic schools, with information about the flexibility that is available to help maintain continuity of operations and education during a period of recovery. We recognize that some communities face more immediate concerns, but we encourage you to consider the flexibilities and support that you may need. The Department is here to help.

For children of affected families, returning to school can provide stability in a time of upheaval. The Department stands ready to provide whatever flexibility and support it can to help ensure all children, particularly those in the hurricane-impacted areas, receive a quality education.

As you assess the damage and your recovery needs, please continue to reach out to the Department—the attached guidance includes a variety of ways to do so—and do not hesitate to let us know your needs and what other questions you may have as your assessments and recovery efforts continue.

The entire Department team and I look forward to working with all of you in the coming days, weeks and months on this critical effort. Please know that we appreciate the significant work you are doing to address the needs of your education communities and to implement recovery efforts.

Sincerely,

/s/

Betsy DeVos

Attachment: Non-Regulatory Guidance on Flexibility and Waivers for Grantees and Program Participants Impacted by Federally Declared Disasters