

## **Funding Opportunity for Hurricane Helene Impacted Counties**

### **Mental Health, Resilience and Well-Being Grants for Staff of Youth Serving Organizations**

#### **Overarching Goals**

To increase access to mental health, resilience and well-being resources for the staff of nonprofit organizations who are specifically supporting the mental health and resiliency of youth and their families impacted by Hurricane Helene.

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation (Foundation) hopes this funding opportunity will serve to extend its reach. Organizations currently funded by the Foundation are not eligible to apply for this grant.

#### **Background**

Hurricane Helene's impact on numerous communities throughout western North Carolina changed the landscape of the state forever. And while this was one of the most catastrophic natural disasters to ever hit this region, it has also proven to be a testament to the resiliency of the people and community organizations that mobilized and answered the call.

The Foundation recognizes that people and providers working in youth mental health are on the front lines of care. Essential to the healing and development of children and families, these professionals frequently face high levels of stress, burnout, and secondary trauma—especially in the wake of natural disasters and other crises.

This new funding opportunity is recognition that, almost one year later, flexible funding is needed to support the nonprofit workforce and the **staff** that have given so much to others while also being personally impacted by the storm. Our aim is to provide teams in the western region the chance to rest, recover, and access resources for mental health, resilience, and well-being as they continue rebuilding their communities.

#### **Overview of Funding Opportunity**

This grant opportunity will provide \$25,000 in funding each for up to 20 nonprofit organizations over a one-year period. Eligible organizations must be working in the fields of youth mental health, in alignment with the Foundation's focus on youth mental health, connectedness, and resilience. The purpose of this funding is to support organizational efforts that prioritize **staff** well-being, allowing teams the necessary time and resources to rest, restore, and continue healing from the ongoing impacts of the recent natural disaster and the role they have played in the response.

For this opportunity, the Foundation recognizes that resilience and well-being are holistic and can encompass multiple dimensions, including mental, physical, environmental, financial,

social, and occupational health. Each of these dimensions of well-being is interconnected and interdependent. To help demonstrate the vast array of possibilities, listed below are potential approaches to utilizing these funds, in addition to sample activities. However, these funds will be flexible to meet the needs of the organization's **staff**; the Foundation is not prescribing any specific approach. Grantees may wish to employ one approach, or a hybrid approach. We encourage you to start conversations with your teams to explore what is needed most for them at this time.

1. **Full-team interventions:** Employee assistance programs or making counseling available to staff, wellness coaching on a variety of topics (healthy eating, active living, emotional well-being, financial coaching, etc.), remote work upgrades, leadership coaching and facilitation support, team-building retreats, curation of tools and resources, wellness days/paid time off, among many other possibilities.
2. **Individual discretionary stipends:** Ranging from private therapy to accessing behavioral health resources, stress management, sleep supports, offsetting gym memberships, access to digital and online resources for mental health, various healing modalities such as massage therapy and acupuncture, food boxes and prepared meal deliveries, and well-being activities such as yoga or meditation.

### Eligibility and Selection Criteria

Eligible organizations include the following:

- **Organization Type:**
  - Nonprofit organization that is exempt under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and is classified as “not a private foundation” under Section 509(a)
  - OR -
  - Fiscally sponsored program – A group or project with a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization acting as a fiscal sponsor. Please note that the fiscal sponsor is considered the grantee and is responsible for all legal aspects of the project, including reporting and financial management.
- **Location:** Organizations must be based in the following counties designated as the most impacted and distressed areas because of Hurricane Helene [[Source: FEMA and HUD, as of 6 February 2025](#)]:
  - Counties included are Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Burke, Caldwell, Cleveland, Haywood, Henderson, Madison, McDowell, Mecklenburg, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Transylvania, Yancey.
- **Organization Focus:**
  - Organizations that have an existing program or initiative that provides direct service that is centered on supporting mental health, well-being, and resilience for children and/or youth and their families impacted by Hurricane Helene.



**Please Note:** Organizations that are currently receiving funding from the Blue Cross NC Foundation are not eligible to apply for this opportunity. Additionally, universities, government entities, professional associations, hospitals, and pass-through intermediaries are not eligible to apply. If you have a question about whether your organization is eligible, please contact the Foundation at [grants@bcbsncfoundation.org](mailto:grants@bcbsncfoundation.org).

Applications from eligible organizations will be reviewed by Foundation staff with particular attention to the following elements:

- Priority consideration given to organizations that have not had access to resources to support their **staff** for mental health, resilience, and/or and well-being.
- Clearly stated strategies for **staff** inclusion and decision making.
- Geographical representation.

### How to Apply

Each organization will need to submit an [application](#) by Thursday, October 16 to be considered for this grant opportunity. Each applicant will be asked to complete brief organizational background data as part of the application. A project budget is not required. The application questions are:

1. What types of work is your organization currently doing to support mental health and resiliency of youth and their families post-Helene?
2. If your organization is currently supporting **staff** well-being, what initiatives or practices are in place? *There is no expectation that your organization is currently supporting staff well-being. However, we would like to provide the opportunity for you to share any current supports or initiatives, if applicable.*
3. How will this funding help your organization initiate or expand **staff** well-being supports?
4. How will you include organizational staff in the decision-making and implementation of this grant?

The Foundation will hold a 30-minute question-and-answer session on Thursday, September 25 at 10:30 a.m. via Zoom. If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity, please register to attend:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_dQs43rdOQaSE9TAFX72mXQ](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_dQs43rdOQaSE9TAFX72mXQ).

### Questions

For questions about this funding opportunity, the application submission process, or to discuss alternate submission arrangements other than the Foundation's online application portal, contact [grants@bcbsncfoundation.org](mailto:grants@bcbsncfoundation.org).

### Timeline

Deadline or Activity	Date(s)
Funding Opportunity Announced	September 18, 2025
Question and Answer Session	September 25, 2025
Deadline to Apply	October 16, 2025
Grant Awardees Notified	October 30, 2025

### Key Terms

- **Youth serving organization:** organization that works directly with, and on behalf of youth, providing programs, services, and supports that address their developmental needs as well as opportunities to cultivate their leadership.

### About the Foundation

The Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation is a private, charitable foundation established as an independent entity by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina in 2000. Over the past two decades, the organization has worked with - and supported - nonprofit organizations, government entities, and community partnerships across the state, investing \$269 million into North Carolina through more than 1,600 grants, collaborations, and special initiatives. Learn more at [bcbsncfoundation.org](https://bcbsncfoundation.org).