

P R E S S R E L E A S E

EMPIRE BLUE CROSS AND BLUE SHIELD ADJUSTS HEALTH AND PHARMACY GUIDELINES FOR MEMBERS IN TEXAS AND LOUISIANA AFFECTED BY HURRICANE IKE

Free telephonic counseling and a 24-hour Nurse Helpline established for impacted members

New York – September 12, 2008 – Empire Blue Cross and Blue Shield, an independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, today announced revised medical and pharmacy guidelines to help members who are directly impacted by Hurricane Ike. In addition, a 24-hour nurse helpline - 1-866-417-7107 - has been established to assist members.

The revised guidelines will help members who are impacted by hurricane Ike access needed medical care and prescription drugs.

Members affected by the hurricane should seek medical assistance wherever it is available and have their medications refilled at any pharmacy or shipped to them at an alternative address.

In addition, from Sept. 12 through Sept. 19, 2008, for Empire members evacuating from Texas and Louisiana, all providers caring for affected members will be considered “in-network” providers, and affected members will not be required to satisfy prior authorization, pre-certification or referral requirements during this time.

These revisions apply to affected members living in Texas and Louisiana who are under a mandatory evacuation.

For impacted members, Empire is:

- Suspending requirements for prior authorization and pre-certification.
- Suspending requirements for authorization or referral from a primary care physician.
- Allowing the affected members to see any physician necessary to provide access to care.
- Paying all claims as in-network, regardless of whether or not the health care provider is in network.
- Suspending early refill limits and shipping prescriptions to members at alternative addresses.
- Suspending utilization management (UM) review of in-hospital cases.

These medical and pharmacy guidelines are effective Sept. 12 through Sept. 19, 2008. At that time, it will be determined if these guidelines need to be extended.

The company’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is offering free telephonic counseling and referral services for the next 30 days to all members in the areas impacted by the hurricane. Services include access to a resource-rich Web site and telephonic consultations with professional counselors. The EAP program is available 24

hours a day by calling, toll-free, 1-800-765-4446, or by logging into the EAP member Web site.

For additional questions, members should call the phone number on the back of their membership card. If they do not have their card, they should call 1-866-417-7107.

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Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield (Empire) is the trade name of Empire HealthChoice Assurance, Inc., and Empire Blue Cross Blue Shield HMO is the trade name of Empire HealthChoice HMO, Inc., independent licensees of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, serving residents and businesses in the 28 eastern and southeastern counties of New York State. Additional information about Empire is available at www.empireblue.com.