

## Displaced Hurricane Victims & Florida KidCare

# Innovations

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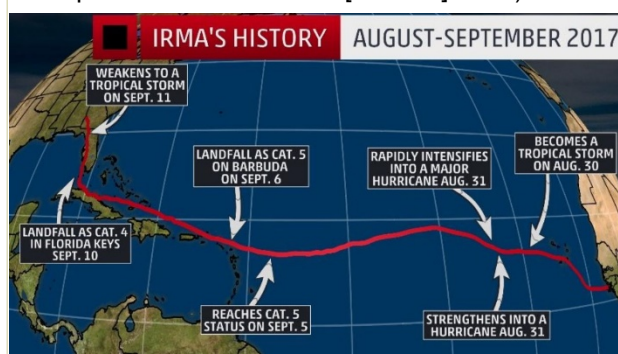
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#### Credits:

Agency for Health Care  
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Florida Department of Health in  
Broward County  
Health Planning Council of  
Southwest Florida  
Lawton & Rhea Chiles Center  
National Association of Community  
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Primary Care Access Network  
University of South Florida  
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## Working collaboratively to ensure uninterrupted healthcare services to children

Displacement of communities due to catastrophic and severe weather conditions is a traditional response to reduce fatality during a state of emergency. On August 25, 2017, Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Houston, Texas, resulting in 30,000 citizens relocating for safety (Smith, Banik, & Haque, 2018). Subsequently, two weeks later, Hurricanes Irma and Maria disrupted many communities including those in the Caribbean islands and coastal United States resulting in 7 million people displaced throughout the United States (Smith et al., 2018). Natural disasters have caused lingering effects of suffering and unfortunate events, however advocacy organizations and businesses across Florida have worked collaboratively to ensure access to healthcare is not compromised for displaced communities. Florida KidCare enrollment is year-round, in response to the impact of the hurricanes, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) approved the extension of Marketplace eligibility to receive healthcare services beyond the typical open enrollment period for children and adults (Erin Durkin, 2017). The goal of this Special Enrollment Period (SEP) was to reach displaced families with both previously insured and currently uninsured children that may be eligible for Medicaid and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (Erin Durkin, 2017). As a result of the evacuation, there were 11,878 Puerto Rican evacuee students enrolled into the Florida public school system, as of March 2018, exemplifying the need for assistance in the local area (Florida Department of Education [FLDOE] 2018).



Source: [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com)



Source: [www.abcnews.go.com](http://www.abcnews.go.com)

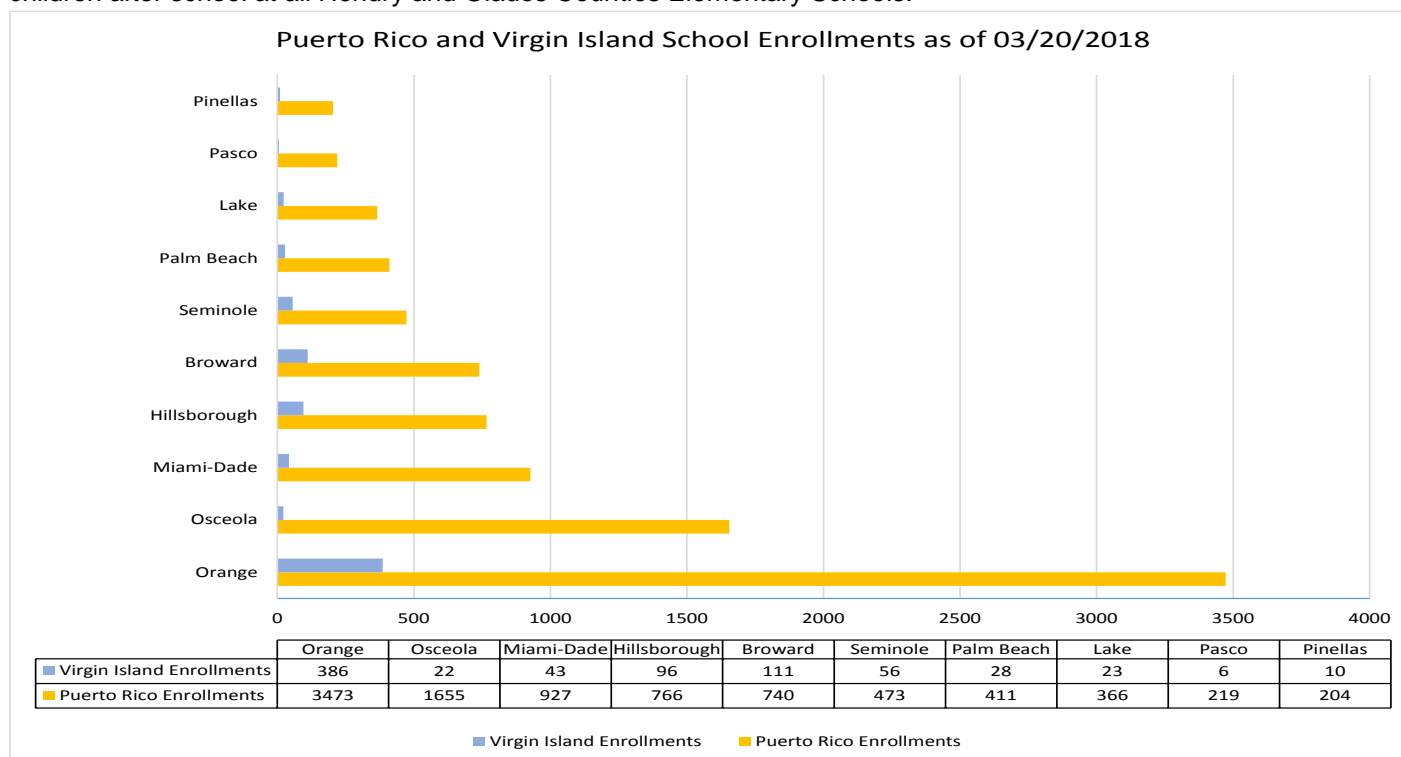
## Innovations

### IDENTIFYING THE DISPLACED

Challenges are common when responding to emergency situations and the 2017 hurricane season was no different. Although preparation for hurricane season commenced throughout the State of Florida by educating the community on how to respond, as seen in the Salud al dia magazine provided by Florida Department of Health in Broward County, unexpected circumstances can still occur. Hurricanes Irma and Maria caused devastation to many families and resulted in the migration from the Florida Keys and the Caribbean (U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico) to areas throughout Florida.

A webinar hosted by the National Association of Community Health Centers featured Linda Carmona-Sanchez, Director for Grants Management & Outreach for the Florida Association of Community Health Centers, shared great insights on the challenges that impacted families caused by the devastating hurricanes in 2017. According to Linda, “approximately 350,000 evacuees migrated to Hispanic communities in Florida as a result of the 2017 hurricanes, primarily into the Greater Miami Area (70% Hispanic), the Tampa Bay Area (11% Hispanic) and the Greater Orlando Area (17.5% Hispanic), making integration into the communities easier for migrated families.” According to data from the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), as of March 2018, the highest rate of displaced student enrollments were located in Greater Miami (Miami, Palm Beach and Broward Counties) which enrolled 2,260 students, Tampa Bay (Hillsborough, Pinellas, and Pasco Counties) which enrolled 1,301 students and the Greater Orlando Area (Lake, Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties) which enrolled 6,454 students identifying the need to intervene in the public schools to identify and assist displaced families from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands (FLDOE, 2018).

Rebecca Miele, Florida KidCare Outreach Manager from the Florida Department of Health in Broward County, shared how they “worked with the school board to provide services to families as students arrived, but were not able to enroll children into Florida KidCare due to ineligibility.” This was a common trend explained by Linda Carmona-Sanchez who stated that “many [families] arrived to the United States with just the shirts on their backs”. Sarah Carrillo, Florida KidCare Coalition of Lee/Collier Counties Lead Chair and Navigator Project Manager of the Health Planning Council of Southwest Florida (HPCSWF) found this issue as an opportunity to educate the local community. The HPCSWF worked with The Healthier Hendry Glades Task Force to facilitate an outreach project providing Florida KidCare materials, along with other healthcare related information within informational bags that were distributed to parents picking up their children after school at all Hendry and Glades Counties Elementary Schools.



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### COLLABORATIVE SUCCESS

Sarah Carrillo described their collaborative work with the Healthier Hendry Glades Task Force as “one of the most beneficial partnerships” established to reach the displaced families. Sarah explained that “it was difficult to identify displaced families because they were scattered throughout the area”, therefore, working collaboratively allowed more resources to be shared in multiple places. Anne Packham, ACA Marketplace Project Director of Primary Care Access Network (PCAN) in Orlando, explained that most families were hard to reach primarily due to their “low literacy and lack of trust in government officials” therefore it was also helpful for PCAN to work collaboratively with community partners to reach the displaced population migrated to Central Florida.

The trauma of hurricane season affected not only the shores of Puerto Rico, but also Central Florida, as an unexpected wave of approximately 200,000 families migrated to local counties including Orlando. PCAN was one of several local organizations to respond and assist families as they sought care and access to health insurance for their families. Anne Packham shared that “the organization attended outreach events such as local job fairs to educate families on access to care options and assist with enrollment.” Challenges were faced as PCAN found themselves competing with large agencies with more funding to assist the displaced families, however, newly established relationships with organizations who shared the same vision as PCAN allowed them to overcome the barriers and serve their communities more broadly. According to Anne, “several key partnerships formed to assist migrated families including: partnerships with several community and faith-based organizations, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the State of Florida, Puerto Rico Federal Affairs Administration, City of Orlando Hispanic Office of Assistance, Shepard’s Hope, Hispanic Spanish Counseling, Latino Leadership, Center for Multicultural Awareness, Longwood Clinic, The Mexican Consulate, and the Orlando Multi-Agency Resource Center (MARC)”, which offered services to those impacted by Hurricane Maria until March 30, 2018. . Anne explained outcomes from serving at MARC, “PCAN navigators completed 48 consumer appointments. Twenty-three people enrolled during those appointments and 12 appointments were scheduled for post-enrollment help. The remainder didn’t enroll during their sessions at the MARC, often because they didn’t have the correct paperwork but some followed up with an appointment at one of our other locations to finish the enrollment.” PCAN also worked with The Hispanic Office for Local Assistance (HOLA) who provided bilingual services to Puerto Rican evacuees from October 3 – November 1, 2017 and assisted 3,394 individuals.

Forming partnerships with community agencies allowed the PCAN outreach team to become a ‘one-stop shop’ for consumers as the community can now “see us as a broad resource”, as Anne described. Anne also explained that “people were more receptive to receiving assistance with healthcare if housing and job assistance were also offered in the same location”. Recommendations shared by Anne Packham for outreach and working with displaced families includes: utilizing assisters who speak the native language of the families, working closely with housing and job source organizations, and also forming a coalition with multiple organizations, with the same shared vision.



Source: Anne Packham Twitter page



Source: CityofOrlando.net