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News Release

 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
 October 31, 2012

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HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius declares public health emergency for New York

Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius today declared a public health emergency for New York in the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, which made landfall on the East Coast Monday evening. The action will enable the Secretary to ensure that beneficiaries of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), continue to receive services as the New York communities respond and recover from this emergency.

The public health emergency is declared under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act and is necessary so that HHS may waive or modify certain Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP requirements under section 1135 of the Social Security Act in an area where there has been a declaration of an emergency or disaster under the Stafford Act. The state can submit waiver requests through Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) Regional Office.

Under section 1135, HHS may permit affected health care facilities in New York to adjust certain operating procedures temporarily and continue to be reimbursed under Medicare, Medicaid and CHIP. For example, a health care facility can quickly establish an emergency temporary location to provide health care services and be assured that it will be reimbursed for providing those services.

HHS agencies are working with state agencies and regional networks to respond to public health, medical and human services needs of impacted communities. More than 500 HHS personnel are deployed to provide assistance in response to state requests.

Nine Disaster Medical Assistance Teams, a team of U.S. Public Health Service officers, and caches of medical supplies are beginning to provide care in shelters in the New York City area today. The Disaster Medical Assistance Teams of medical professionals come from Minnesota, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Connecticut, Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, Texas and Florida. A 50-person Disaster Medical Assistance Team from Tennessee is providing medical care in general population shelters in New Jersey.

Additional teams and Federal Medical Stations are en route to New York at the state's request to support medical needs in New York City. Other teams and equipment are available if needed in other impacted states.

An Incident Response Coordination Team will make sure federal public health and medical teams have what they need to assist states at this critical time. This team is the on-the-ground command-and-control for federal public health and medical assets.

HHS information on protecting health immediately after a hurricane or to prepare for disasters is available at www.phe.gov/emergency. In addition, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has health tips available by texting SANDY to 87000. Today's Public Health Emergency declaration is available at http://www.hhs.gov/secretary/phe_sandy2012.html.

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