

The 2019 Merit-based Incentive Payment System (MIPS) Automatic Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Policy

We established an automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy beginning with the 2017 performance period for clinicians affected by natural disasters. Clinicians affected by these extreme and uncontrollable circumstances may have their performance categories reweighted or receive a neutral payment adjustment. This resource addresses the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy as it applies to individual MIPS eligible clinicians but does not address how this policy applies to MIPS eligible clinicians who participate in MIPS through their Alternative Payment Model.

Who Does the Automatic Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Policy Apply To?

The automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy applies to MIPS eligible clinicians who are located in a CMS-designated region that has been affected by an extreme and uncontrollable event (such as a [FEMA-designated major disaster](#)) during the 2019 MIPS performance period. For those clinicians affected by natural disasters—such as [Tropical Storm/Hurricane Barry](#) and Hurricane Dorian in [North Carolina](#) and [South Carolina](#)—CMS aims to reduce your reporting burden by not requiring you to submit an application to reweight the performance categories under MIPS.

The automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy **does not apply to groups or virtual groups.**

- Groups and virtual groups that submit data will be scored according to existing MIPS scoring policies.
- The payment adjustment associated with their final score will be applied to all MIPS eligible clinicians in the group or virtual group, including those who qualify for the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy.

How Does the Automatic Extreme and Uncontrollable Circumstances Policy Work?

We will identify MIPS eligible clinicians who are located in CMS-designated areas that have been affected by an extreme and uncontrollable circumstance based on the address associated with the clinician in the Provider Enrollment, Chain, and Ownership System (PECOS) which is the practice address displayed on the [QPP Participation Status Tool](#).

CMS makes every effort to accurately identify all clinicians who are eligible for this policy. **Clinicians should ensure that the practice address listed in PECOS is up to date and check their performance feedback on gpp.cms.gov to ensure the policy was correctly applied, as applicable.**

MIPS eligible clinicians who are automatically identified and subject to MIPS will have all four performance categories weighted at zero percent.

You will automatically receive a score equal to the performance threshold, which will result in a neutral payment adjustment (neither a positive nor a negative adjustment) for the 2021 MIPS payment year **unless**:

- You submit data for two or more MIPS performance categories (Quality, Improvement Activities, and/or Promoting Interoperability) as an individual;
- You are part of a group or virtual group that submits data on behalf of its clinicians; or
- You are parting in MIPS through an APM Entity.

Under the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy, **the Cost performance category will always be weighted at zero percent**, even if you submit data for the other performance categories.

For a more detailed explanation of how your performance categories will be reweighted, please see [Appendix A](#).

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I know if I'm in an area designated by CMS as being affected by an extreme and uncontrollable circumstance?

We will communicate information about events that trigger the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy through the Quality Payment Program listservs. In addition, we will update this fact sheet to identify any new events.

As noted above, FEMA issued an Emergency Disaster Declaration for certain areas of Louisiana after Tropical Storm/Hurricane Barry and for certain areas of North Carolina and South Carolina after Hurricane Dorian. You can find the designated areas for these events here:

- Designated parishes for Storm/Hurricane Barry: [EM-3416](#);
- Designated areas for Hurricane Dorian in North Carolina: [DR-4465](#)
- Designated areas for Hurricane Dorian in South Carolina: [DR-4464](#)

Once we identify new events, you can find information about designated disaster areas on the [Federal Emergency Management Agency's \(FEMA\) designated disaster areas](#) page. Clinicians should monitor these pages for updates on designated disaster areas.

What if I am part of a group or virtual group where some, but not all, clinicians are located in areas designated by CMS as affected by an extreme and uncontrollable circumstance?

The automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy will only apply to individual MIPS eligible clinicians located in the designated area. CMS will assign a weight of zero percent in the MIPS final score, resulting in a neutral payment adjustment for the 2021 MIPS payment year to MIPS eligible clinicians located in the designated area(s), **unless** your group or virtual group submits data on your behalf during the 2019 submission period.

A group or virtual group that chooses to submit data for the 2019 performance period will be scored according to the existing and applicable 2019 MIPS scoring policies.

Since the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy does not apply outside of FEMA designated areas, groups and virtual groups can complete an extreme and uncontrollable circumstance application if the extreme and uncontrollable circumstance impacts their ability to collect data, at a group level, for a specific MIPS performance category. For more information on this application, please visit the [Quality Payment Program website](#).

Note: This policy only applies to **individual submissions**.

If you are in a group or virtual group that submits data on behalf of all its clinicians, we will score the submission according to existing MIPS scoring policies and you will receive the group or virtual group's final score and payment adjustment.

What should I do if I am eligible for the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy, but my performance feedback does not reflect the correct reweighting??

If you believe that you qualified for the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy but you do not see it reflected in your performance feedback, you should submit a targeted review request in the 60 days following the release of 2019 performance feedback so that CMS can review your eligibility for this policy.

What happens if I am a MIPS eligible clinician covered by the automatic extreme and uncontrollable policy but still submit data?

That depends on how many performance categories you submit data for, as an individual.

- If you submit data for one performance category (or no data at all), you will receive a final score equal to the performance threshold and receive a neutral payment adjustment.
- If you submit data for two or three performance categories (Quality, Improvement Activities, and/or Promoting Interoperability), you will be scored on the performance categories for which you submitted data. Your payment adjustment will be determined by your final score.

- You will **not** be scored on the Cost performance category under the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy.

What happens if I've submitted Medicare Part B claims prior to a triggering event for the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy?

If a MIPS eligible clinician in a small practice reports via Medicare Part B claims collection type for the Quality performance category, and we receive data for the clinician prior to a triggering event for the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy, their Medicare Part B claims data would only contribute to their final score if they also submit data for either the Promoting Interoperability or the Improvement Activities performance categories.

Where Can I Learn More?

- [Quality Payment Program](#)
- [2019 PFS Final Rule](#)
- [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\) designated disaster areas](#)
- [CMS's Emergency Preparedness and Response](#)
- [2019 Exception FAQs](#)

You can subscribe to the [QPP listserv](#) and you can also contact the Quality Payment Program at 1-866-288-8292 (TTY 1-877-715-6222), Monday through Friday, 8:00 AM-8:00 PM ET or by email at: QPP@cms.hhs.gov.

Appendix A

The table below illustrates the 2019 performance category reweighting policies that CMS will apply for clinicians who qualify for the automatic extreme and uncontrollable circumstances policy but choose to submit MIPS data as individuals.¹

Data Submitted	Quality Category Weight	Promoting Interoperability Category Weight	Improvement Activities Category Weight	Cost Category Weight	Payment Adjustment
No data	0%	0%	0%	0%	Neutral
Submit Data for One Performance Category					
Quality Only	100%	0%	0%	0%	Neutral
Promoting Interoperability Only	0%	100%	0%	0%	Neutral
Improvement Activities Only	0%	0%	100%	0%	Neutral
Submit Data for Two Performance Categories					
Quality and Promoting Interoperability	75%	25%	0%	0%	Positive, Negative, or Neutral
Quality and Improvement Activities	85%	0%	15%	0%	Positive, Negative, or Neutral
Improvement Activities and Promoting Interoperability	0%	50%	50%	0%	Positive, Negative, or Neutral
Submit Data for Three Performance Categories					
Quality and Improvement Activities and Promoting Interoperability	60%	25%	15%	0%	Positive, Negative, or Neutral

¹ See §414.1380.