



## Health Services Newsletter

### **IT'S TIME TO PREPARE FOR EMERGENCIES AND DISASTERS**

Emergencies and disasters can occur suddenly and leave people feeling overwhelmed and powerless. Being prepared can lessen some of these feelings and help you to better protect yourself and the children, families and programs you serve.

Planning is a key part of systems and services in Head Start. Your program creates, maintains, and revises plans on service delivery to children and families. As part of the planning process, all programs determine how they need to prepare for and respond to emergency or natural disaster situations and develop written plans.

Now is a good time to review your program's plans to address:

- natural disasters that are relevant to your location (such as earthquakes, tornados, tsunamis or flash floods, extreme temperatures, storms, and volcanoes) and
- emergencies that could occur in any location (such as acts of violence, exposure to hazardous agents, facility damage, fire, missing child, power outages).

One way to prepare for disasters is to consider all possible emergencies, plan for worst case or unique scenarios, and develop emergency plans. A good place to start is to review your program's current emergency preparedness plans and consult the:

- Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC)
- Policy Council
- local emergency management agency, or
- regional emergency management specialists.

See the Administration for Children and Families website ([www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohsepr](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohsepr)) for regional emergency specialists contact information or email ([ohsepr@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:ohsepr@acf.hhs.gov)).

Visit the Office of Head Start (OHS) National Center on Health's Emergency Preparedness website at for more resources on how to prepare. (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/ep>)



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## 5 Reasons to Prepare

1. Emergencies, large and small, occur in every community, even yours.
2. Planning ahead can reduce the risk of harm or injury to both children and staff.
3. You are already doing it! Since every program prepares plans to meet Head Start Program Performance Standards, it is easy to incorporate emergency preparedness into these existing documents.
4. As a key member of the community, Head Start should participate in local planning efforts. Your emergency preparedness plan complements existing efforts by focusing on how your program fits into the community plan. By collaborating with administrators, staff, families, and members of the community at large you contribute to community resilience and successful planning.
5. Emergency preparedness is a dynamic planning process of practice, review, and revision that is essential to program excellence.

## THERE HASN'T BEEN A DISASTER IN MY AREA BEFORE. WHY SHOULD I PREPARE?

The only thing predictable about emergencies and disasters is that they are unpredictable. Any area can be affected by extreme temperatures, storms, wind, flood, tornadoes, fires, or community events that causes the center to have to shelter in place or evacuate.

Training is essential for being prepared. Staff should receive training on emergency/disaster planning and response. Trainings can be provided by emergency management agencies, educators, child care health consultants, mental health consultants, health professionals, or emergency personnel qualified and experienced in disaster preparedness and response. Collaborating with your community partners also helps build strong relationships with those who can help in times of need.

Being prepared for emergencies and disasters helps ensure the safety of your program and the health and well-being of your staff, children and families.

## WHY PRACTICE?

A good emergency preparedness plan helps your program to respond appropriately and quickly to circumstances that occur. It helps to reduce risks to everyone in your Head Start community. To determine whether your plan really works, it needs to be practiced with staff, families and community partners.

Practicing your plans helps you:

- See what works
- See what does not work
- Build relationships with community partners and families
- Ease fears and concerns about emergency situations
- Make sure that accommodation have been made for children, staff and families with special needs (limited English proficiency, blindness or visual disabilities, cognitive or emotional disabilities, deafness or hearing loss, permanent or temporary mobility/physical disabilities and health conditions such as asthma and severe allergies)
- Build awareness of the importance of emergency preparedness
- Identify topics or areas that staff may need more emergency preparedness training
- Discover things about your plan you might not have known if you had not practiced
- Solve problems
- Find out if you have the correct contact information for people and emergency agencies in your community
- Determine if your communication plans work
- See how changes in children's ages or developmental abilities may affect your plans
- Improve your emergency preparedness plans
- Support the health and well-being of children, families, and your staff



## WHY PRACTICE? (CONT)

Regular emergency and evacuation drills/exercises are an important safety practice in Head Start programs. Fire drills and other practice exercises help everyone become familiar with emergency procedures and activities. These activities help reduce anxiety and promote confidence in everyone's ability to protect themselves and others during emergencies.

It's also important to remember that when there are new staff or new children enrolled in your program, you need to make sure that they have the opportunity to take part in practice drills. Regularly scheduled practices helps to ensure that everyone knows what to do and what to expect.

### Tracking Children in an Emergency

There must be a plan in place to account for all children/adults at the time of an emergency, especially when there is an evacuation or a group is already off site.

Assigning responsibility to the center director or a caregiver to bring a class roster (that includes emergency contact information, parent or guardian phone numbers, etc), and to count the children and adults, will ensure that all children and adults are accounted for in emergency situations. Practice accounting for children and adults during your next emergency drill.

**SOURCE:** <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/standardview/9.2.4.6>

### *For your Family Newsletter:*

*Families should have an emergency plan and disaster supply kit. Encourage families to prepare for an emergency or disaster by sharing information in your newsletter. The following information was written for you to share with your families.*

#### **Be Safe and Healthy: Plan for Emergencies**

As a parent and caregiver, one of the jobs you do best is keeping your family healthy and safe. If you are like many people, some issues can feel overwhelming, like thinking about emergencies or disasters.

Head Start staff are here to help you plan, prepare, and recover if there is an emergency. This is why we share with you our plans for what we would do and how we would communicate with you if an emergency happens.

One of the most important things you can do for us is to always make sure we have your current emergency contact information. This is key for helping us communicate with you about any emergencies. It helps us share important information that will help us keep your child safe.

If any of your contact information has changed (Did you get a new job? Change your phone number? Move to a new location?), let us know, and we will update our records.

We are also here to suggest material you may need for your own emergency plans and supply kits. [NOTE TO PROGRAM: You could provide the links to resources listed on the following pages or content from those resources here.]

If you want to know more about how to provide support to your family or receive help in planning or coping with emergencies, let us know. We are here to help keep your family safe and healthy.



**Find more information with these resources**

- **Emergency Preparedness Webcast**
- **Emergency Supply List**
- **Family Communication Plan**
- **4 steps to Prepare your Family for Disasters**

**TIME TO ORGANIZE YOUR DISASTER SUPPLIES!**

One of the first steps in emergency or disaster planning is to make sure that your program has emergency supplies and food in case your program needs to shelter-in-place or evacuate in a disaster. You also need to make sure that these items are up-to-date and not expired.

Work with your HSAC, policy council, community partners, and your regional emergency management specialists to determine what should be in your disaster supplies kit, be sure to include first aid and other supplies, that might be needed in an emergency or disaster. This is in addition to and separate from classroom first aid kits.

Consider the following questions:

- Do you and your staff know your program’s schedule for updating your disaster supplies kit, making sure items are not expired, and who is responsible for doing this?
- Does your staff know where these supplies are located?
- Are the locations of supplies clearly marked?
- Does your staff know how to use your supply kits?
- Are supply kits taken during field trips or other times when children are on the bus?

A number of websites provide sample kit supply lists that may be useful starting points for building kits.

*For kits for families, see:*

- American Academy of Pediatrics HealthyChildren.org Family Disaster Supplies List <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/at-home/Pages/Family-Disaster-Supplies-List.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Gather Emergency Supplies <http://emergency.cdc.gov/preparedness/kit/disasters/>
- Ready.gov’s Build A Kit <http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit>

*For kits for centers/programs, see:*

Caring for Our Children First Aid and Emergency Supplies Standard <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/5.6.0.1>

The collage features several key resources:
 

- Family Communication Plan:** A form with sections for 'Let them know you're OK!', 'What to do if you get separated', and 'Know the Numbers!'.
- 4 Steps to Prepare Your Family for Disasters:** An infographic with numbered steps: 1. Find out what to do, 2. Create a family disaster plan, 3. Practice your plan, and 4. Prepare your kit.
- Recommended Items to Include in a Basic Emergency Supply Kit:** A checklist with categories like 'Water', 'Food', 'First Aid Kit', 'Tools', 'Flashlights', 'Batteries', 'Maps', 'Cash', 'Clothing', 'Toiletries', 'Medications', 'Special needs', 'Documents', 'Cash', 'First Aid Kit', 'Tools', 'Flashlights', 'Batteries', 'Maps', 'Cash', 'Clothing', 'Toiletries', 'Medications', 'Special needs', 'Documents', 'Cash'.

# RESOURCES

## **ECLKC RESOURCES**

Administration for Children and Families early childhood emergency resources: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ohsepr/early-childhood>

Head Start National Center on Health Emergency Preparedness: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/ep>

Head Start Program Performance Standards and other regulations: <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/hspss>

## **OTHER RESOURCES**

Caring for Our Children Emergency Preparedness Standards: <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/StandardView/StdNum/emergency+preparedness>

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Information on different types of disasters and how to prepare, plan and recover from them. [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov)

AAP Children & Disasters- Disaster preparedness information for physicians, families, children and others. [www.aap.org/disasters](http://www.aap.org/disasters)

### Ready.gov

Information on emergency preparedness including being informed, making a plan, building kits and getting involved.

Preparing for influenza outbreak: Online Training Course - Influenza Prevention and Control: Strategies for Early Education and Child Care Programs <http://www.healthychildcare.org/flu.html>

## **RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES**

Office of Head Start Preparing for Emergencies at Home: [http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/safety-injury-prevention/ep-response/health\\_fts\\_00200\\_072505.html](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center/safety-injury-prevention/ep-response/health_fts_00200_072505.html)

AAP Family Readiness Kit: Preparing to Handle Disasters: [www2.aap.org/family/frk/FOurstepsFRK.pdf](http://www2.aap.org/family/frk/FOurstepsFRK.pdf)

Ready.gov Build-A-Kit: [www.ready.gov/build-a-kit](http://www.ready.gov/build-a-kit) (Available in a number of languages)

FEMA Basic Preparedness: [www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1549-20490-2111/basic\\_preparedness.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1549-20490-2111/basic_preparedness.pdf)

FEMA Family Communication Plan worksheet: [http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/0e3ef555f66e22ab832e284f826c2e9e/FEMA\\_plan\\_parent\\_508\\_071513.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/0e3ef555f66e22ab832e284f826c2e9e/FEMA_plan_parent_508_071513.pdf)

*Fostering a culture of health and wellness  
for Head Start children, families, and staff*

## **NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH**

### *Our Goal*

To help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement best practices and effective approaches within medical and dental care access, health awareness, healthy active living, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety to support healthy outcomes and school readiness for young children and their families.

## **CONTACT US!**

The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to

[nchinfo@aap.org](mailto:nchinfo@aap.org) or call (888) 227-5125.

Subscribe or view all issues of the Health Services Newsletter at National Center on Health in Head Start

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/center>

***School readiness begins with health!***

