Protecting Children During a Disaster

Place Logos Here
If you are responsible for the care of children, you need to know what to do when a disaster strikes. Children are totally dependent on their caretakers in an emergency and you should be ready to protect the children who depend on you. Good disaster planning for children has four critical parts:

1. **Information**

   You must know the needs of the children in your care and how to contact their parents or guardians. Do your children have special needs? Allergies? Disabilities?

   Who is authorized to take custody of the child? How do you contact that person? Part One of this guide has some forms you can use to gather that information.

   You also will need to know current information about your community, its vulnerabilities and where you can safely go when disaster strikes. Who can you call for help and who will call you with a warning? This guide will help you find out.

2. **A Plan**

   These are parts of a good emergency plan, and they are addressed in Part Two of this guide:

   Do you know what you will do in the event of an earthquake, or a fire? Where should you go? If you are told by the Fire Department to “Shelter-in-Place”, can you do that quickly and effectively?

   If you were forced to evacuate to another location, have you thought about where you would go and how you would get there?
3. **Supplies**

Do you have all the supplies that you and the children will need during a disaster? Children, especially very young children, need both *more* and *different* emergency supplies than adults. You will need to gather these supplies together before disaster strikes and the lights go out. You will need to check to make sure that the supplies you have meet the varied needs of the different children in your care. Part Three of this guide will help you select your necessary emergency supplies.

4. **Training**

In an emergency, every second counts. To be ready without hesitation, you will need to practice with the children some basic emergency response procedures. Every child in your care should know what to do during a fire or earthquake without being told. Children will only know what to do if they practice regularly. Part Four of this guide will help you provide the training to the students to respond appropriately to an emergency.

Two excellent resources for information are the **American Red Cross** and **Save the Children**.
Part 1 - Information

Know the Threats and Hazards in Your Community

You should know what to do for the most common emergencies in your community, such as fires, earthquakes and gunfire. You can plan now for how you will respond to these events and then document your response procedures in your written emergency plan. Take the time to **reach out to your local police and fire departments** and ask them if there are any additional threats or hazards that you should plan for. Make the first responders aware of who you are and how many children you have at your location. Ask them if they are aware of your location, what their plans are for major emergencies and if they have any suggestions for your response. Confirm with them how you can sign up for their emergency notification system so that they can alert and advise you during disasters.

You can go to [myplan.calema.gov](http://myplan.calema.gov) and print out a map of all the known natural hazards that may impact your community such as landslide, flooding or the nearest earthquake fault. That hazard map should be part of your emergency plan.
### Part 1 - Information

#### Emergency Contact Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BE READY TO PROVIDE THIS INFORMATION WHEN YOU CALL FOR HELP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your Facility Name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Facility Physical Address</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearest Major Intersection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facility Emergency Contact Telephone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Best Contact Person</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGENCY</th>
<th>PHONE NUMBER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emergency</td>
<td>9-1-1, dial 2-1-1 for non-emergency disaster info</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearest hospital number and address</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Emergency Child Locator Center</td>
<td>(866) 908-9570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poison Control</td>
<td>(800) 222-1222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local City Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-emergency local fire department phone number</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-emergency local police department phone number</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Welfare Services Agency</td>
<td>(800) 540-4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Hotline</td>
<td>(800) 854-7771</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local electric company</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local water/sewer provider</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local gas company</td>
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<tr>
<td>Property manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out-of-area contact*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Establish an out-of-area contact and share it with the children’s caregivers. You and the caregivers will report your status to the out-of-area contact following a disaster. Long distance calls are sometimes more likely to connect when local phone lines are overloaded.
MAKE ADDITIONAL COPIES OF THIS PAGE AS NEEDED.

PARENTS’ WALLET CARD

Fill out the card, cut it out, then laminate it or have a store laminate it for you. If possible, provide both a landline and cell phone number.

CHILDCARE
Name
Phone
Alt

OUT OF AREA
Name:
Phone #:
Alt #:
City:
St.

Primary Evacuation Location:
Alternative Evacuation Location:

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PARENT INFORMATION CARD

Child’s Full Name:
Gender: □ Male □ Female
Birth Date: / / 
Address
Phone: )

Father/Guardian/Domestic
Address:
Home Phone: )
Cell Phone: )
Business: )
Email:

Mother/Guardian/Domestic
Address:
Home Phone: )
Cell Phone: )
Business: )
Email:

Authorized Emergency Contact
Relationship
Home Phone: )
Cell Phone: )
Business: )

Authorized Emergency Contact
Relationship
Home Phone: )
Cell Phone: )
Business: ( )

Physician
Medical Plan
Address
Phone: ( )

Medical Conditions, Allergies,
Children with Specific Needs

Facilities serving children with specific needs must invest more time and resources in preparing for emergencies. This will include attention to specific details, such as how to provide specialized equipment (oxygen, special food), appropriate medication and a back-up list of medical providers for each child. Specific locations should be noted for evacuation for the child who needs specific care. Can they manage the route? Do they need protection from the weather?

Will anyone in your facility (staff or children) require extra attention during an emergency drill, evacuation or lock down? Indicate their names here and which staff members will be assigned to assist.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Assigned Staff Member</th>
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<tbody>
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</tbody>
</table>

There may be other arrangements you can make now, in advance of the next emergency.

- Plan for a backup power source for medical equipment.
- Plan for the transportation of medications that must be refrigerated.
- Check wheelchair access at your identified evacuation locations (both your close by and far away evacuation sites).
Your organization should have a detailed plan on how you will protect the children in your care during an emergency or a disaster. The plan should address both man made threats and natural disasters. The plan should describe what you will do before, during, and after the event.

The plan must be specific and address the condition of your children and the community that surrounds them. You will need to be familiar with the information you gathered about each child to make sure your plan and the supplies that support the plan are sufficient to address the specific needs of all the children in your care.

Are you familiar with the threats and hazards that exist in your community? Need help? Go to http://emilms.fema.gov/is36/index.htm and take the on-line FEMA class Multi Hazard Planning for Childcare.
Your Site Diagram and Neighborhood Map

Create a site layout or diagram of your facility, including each building, room, and floor. Include the outside area. Mark the location of shut-off valves for water and gas, as well as the electrical panel. Pictures of each valve/switch in the “off” position should be in the Emergency Plan. Map the exact locations of each:

- Primary and Secondary exits to the Safe Evacuation Area
- Location of the Safe Evacuation Area with each age group area marked
- Interior “Safe” Room (without windows, if possible)
- Fire Extinguishers, Fire Axes, and Smoke detectors
- 24 Hour Grab-and-Go Kits, First Aid Kits
- Portable file of each child’s records and reunification supplies. (Note: file should be portable, secure, water proof, contain a flashlight, pens, papers and all information on all students and staff)

If there are additional floors in your facility, please use additional pages for maps. Also use a map of your neighborhood to show the routes to the Primary and Back-up Relocation Areas

**DRAW SITE DIAGRAM**
Part 2 - Have a Plan

Evacuation and Relocation

As part of your emergency plan, you should establish who is in charge and have a chain of command for making critical decisions. Everyone on staff should know who is in charge. You will also need to assign responsibilities so that staff members know their duties during an emergency.

The response to many emergencies is to move students and staff to a safe place away from the building (For example, Evacuation from a fire) or even away from the neighborhood (For example, Relocation from a flood).

Your Evacuation and Relocation Plans should be shared with staff and families. Your reunification location, either nearby or out of the community, should be a safe place for children, such as a community center, shelter or enclosed park.

In the event of an evacuation or relocation, a sign should be posted alerting families and authorities where the students and staff will be located. Before an evacuation or relocation, you must have an accurate record of every child and adult. You will need to check that list twice when you relocate to make sure everyone is safe. You will use that same list to account for every child as they are reunited with a parent or guardian.

Identify the following for your location:

Primary Evacuation Location:
Address:

Back-up Evacuation Location:
Address:

Primary Relocation Site:
Address:

Back-up Relocation Site:
Address
Part 2 - Have a Plan

Family Reunification

During an emergency, children can become separated from their families. There are several actions a childcare program should take to reduce the trauma to children and to ensure that all children will be able to quickly reunite with their parents or guardians. Your grab-and-go container of school supplies should include information on each child and staff member, specifically documents that give permission to transport and give medical care. You should have the information listed below for each child in your care.

- Child’s full name, gender, and birth date
- Child’s home address with phone numbers (cell, work, home)
- Mother/Guardian/Domestic Partner’s full name, address/city/zip code, work phone, home phone and cell phone
- Father/Guardian/Domestic Partner’s full name, address/city/zip code, work phone, home phone and cell phone
- TWO Authorized persons who can be contacted in an emergency to take custody of the child. Their names, relationship to the family, (aunt, friend, neighbor) full name, address/city/zip code, work phone, home phone and cell phone
- The name of the child’s physician, address and phone number
- The child’s medical plan information
- A detailed list of any medical conditions, allergies, medications or special needs.

For your convenience, a sample emergency card is included in this document. The child’s information should be reviewed and updated every three months.

Please remember that you will need the information on the emergency card to authorize you to release children only to the specific adults identified by the child’s parent or guardian. If you should relocate to a shelter, the same information will be needed to ensure that only authorized adults have contact with each child.
Part 3 - Emergency Supplies

In an emergency, your center or program may need to be self-reliant and self-sustaining by being able to care for children and staff for 72 hours without any outside assistance. These supplies should be divided into three 24-hour kits that can be easily transported if you are required to evacuate. You will need to check your supplies every 6 months to make sure that they are functional and are sufficient for the number of children you serve. As you plan the supplies you will need, assume that you will not have electricity, gas, water, heating or air conditioning, refrigeration, internet or phone service during the emergency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supplies</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First Aid Kit**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Medications**</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Water -3 Gallons per person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Food ** 3 day supply of infant and baby formula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non Perishable food** for infants and adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable cups, bowls, utensils &amp; food preparation supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can Opener</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency Cash – Bills &amp; Coins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disposable Diapers 3 day supply for all infants and toddlers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toilet Paper, Bathroom Supplies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper Towels, Wet Wipes, Tissues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand Sanitizer, Disinfectant **</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blankets and Ponchos</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOAA Weather Radio with extra batteries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any special equipment required by a child or employee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust Masks/Filter Masks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goggles – 1 pair/person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullhorn, bell or Whistle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maps of the area</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LED Flashlights with extra batteries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of clothing for each child.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

** Must be checked for expired items. Additionally, plastic sheeting, and duct tape for covering windows, doors and vents should be stored with your supplies in case you must Shelter-in-Place.
Part 4 - Training

Children learn by doing. For a child or an adult to learn a skill, they must practice it repeatedly. During an emergency, people are too afraid or confused to learn new skills. This is why the fire service demands that schools practice fire drills regularly. The goal is for students and staff to know what to do in an emergency without being told.

In the event of a disaster, you and the children you care for may be directed by police or fire to perform a specific response. For the safety of your students, you will need to practice these responses so that they and staff can perform them quickly and correctly and feel more confident.

The emergency responses recommended in this guide fall into two groups. First, responses where the building you are in and its contents are the hazard: **Drop, Cover and Hold On** (for earthquakes), **Evacuation** (for fire) and **Relocation** (for flooding or landslides). These three responses focus on protecting children from being hurt by being *inside*. The second group of responses focuses on a hazard that is *outside*, in the community. You will use the building to protect the children: **Lockdown** (armed intruder) or **Shelter-in-Place** (hazardous materials release).

Your plan should carefully define how you and the children you protect will execute these responses. Then, at least once a month you should review them verbally with staff and also practice specific responses with students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Drop, Cover, &amp; Hold On</td>
<td>Every Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evacuation (Fire Drill)</td>
<td>Every Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lockdown</td>
<td>4 times a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shelter-in-Place</td>
<td>2 times a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relocation</td>
<td>once a year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent Reunification</td>
<td>once a year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Part 4 - Training

Use specific events to practice your responses. When you have your Annual Fire Inspection, conduct a fire drill so that the first responders can see your plan in action. Sign up for the Great ShakeOut Earthquake Drill (ShakeOut.org) and practice what you will do in an earthquake. You can combine some of these response drills together, for example, to simulate an earthquake; you can **Drop, Cover and Hold On, Evacuate** and then practice **Parent Reunification**.

Each emergency response has some specific procedures designed to keep everyone safe. Here are descriptions of each response.

**Drop, Cover and Hold On**

![Drop, Cover and Hold On](image)

When an earthquake hits you need to quickly drop to the ground, so you do not fall; take cover under a sturdy desk or table to protect your head and neck from falling objects, and hold on to it until the shaking stops. If there is no table or desk near you, drop to the ground in an inside corner of the building and cover your head and neck with your arms. Do not try to run to another room or the outside.

**Evacuation**

If the threat to the children is inside the building, such as a fire, then you must evacuate everyone to a pre-designated safe area. When you evacuate, you must use the safest and most direct route. Make sure everyone knows and can use the route to the safe area. Your evacuation course should never be blocked or locked. Always have a back-up route in case your primary route is unusable. When you arrive, take roll to ensure that everyone was able to escape. Your plan should always include a back-up evacuation location.

**Lockdown**

If the threat is outside the building, then you must use the building to protect students and staff. During a lockdown, close and lock all exterior doors. Close the blinds, turn off the lights, and have the students sit on the floor. From the outside, the building should appear closed, locked and empty.
Shelter-in-Place

In the event of some large, fast-moving disasters, like a brushfire or hazardous materials release, the first responders will ask that the community “shelter in place”. When they do, you will need to bring everyone inside, like a lockdown, to use the building to protect the children. In addition, you will need to turn off the air conditioning (A/C) for the building since the AC system brings in outside air. Be prepared to stay inside, away from the smoke or fumes, until you are told that it is OK to leave.

For more information on emergency plans for childcare facilities, you can go to the FEMA web site and look for the FEMA online Class IS-36 “Multi-hazard Planning for Childcare”
Simple Tips to Help Children Cope During a Crisis

- **Listen and talk to your children.** Children are often very afraid of the things they do not understand. Listen to them and address their fears in a calm and reassuring manner. Make sure they know that the adults around them are working to keep them safe and secure. Give them lots of time to talk out their fears and any misunderstandings. Provide ample reassurance to deal with anything that is stressing them.

- **Be a good role model.** Children will respond to unfamiliar events by following the example of the adults they trust. If you panic, they will become very fearful and stressed and behave erratically. If you can remain calm, they will take comfort from your behavior and follow your example.

- **Turn off the television.** Broadcast news is designed to hyperstimulate adults; children cannot cope with the relentless news cycle. After 9/11 many children thought that hundreds of planes had hit hundreds of buildings because the event was replayed so many times. Keep the kids calm by limiting their exposure to inflammatory information.

- **Watch for behavior changes.** Children often cope with fear by regressing, having wide emotional swings and complaining of physical pain. These are normal coping behaviors brought on by stress and will diminish with reassurance and time. Be patient, reassuring and calm.

- **Connect with normal patterns and tasks.** Whenever possible, use normal behaviors, tasks and patterns. These familiar events will give children comfort and a sense of control. While they may not be able to control everything, they can control some things.
Additional Resources

American Red Cross
Save the Children - Get Ready Get Safe
Ready – Preparing for a Disaster
Center for Missing & Exploited Children
Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles

Redcross.org
Savethechildren.org
Ready.gov
1-800-THE-LOST
CHLA.org
This document was created by the Los Angeles County Children in Disasters Working Group. Special Thanks to the San Diego Office of Emergency Management.