

# Parents: Is Your Child Care Program Prepared for an Emergency Event?

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When looking for a child care program, your most important consideration is the safety and wellbeing of your child. Knowing your child will be cared for in a healthy and secure environment that has appropriate safety measures in place is a top priority.

Child care programs should have a plan in place for emergency situations. These situations include not only medical emergencies, but also weather-related emergencies as well as pandemics. Most of us are aware of natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes and floods, but there are also technological disasters that can impact a child care program. We all need to be as prepared as possible and have plans in place for any kind of disaster or emergency. This is especially critical for programs and schools with young children.

For parents with children in child care, knowing what kind of plan is in place and what to do in case of emergencies is essential. Make sure you know the what, when, where and how of your child care provider's emergency action plan by asking these ten questions.

- 1 Do you have an emergency preparedness plan for emergencies that are likely to occur in your area?**
  - Find out if there is a person/ number you can call or a central phone number that will have information.
  - Make sure they have one. Ask for a copy of it. If they do not have a plan, find out when they will. Let them know you feel it is necessary.
- 2 How will you evacuate my child to a safe, predetermined location?**
  - Find out what procedures will be used, how the children will be moved, and to where.
  - Make sure the place they move to is safe and acceptable to you. Ask if there is a secondary evacuation location.
  - If your child has special needs, discuss how your provider will accommodate those needs.
- 3 How and when will I be notified if an emergency event occurs when my child is in child care?**
  - Make sure you have at least two ways to be contacted, including another person with whom messages could be left for you (someone out of your geographic area would be ideal).
  - Keep your contact information current: phone numbers, other people who can reach you, etc.
- 4 If I cannot get to my child during or after the emergency, how will you continue to care for my child?**
  - Provide any extra supplies and important information the provider will need to care for your child for a longer period of time.
  - Discuss any plans or procedures you do not agree with or understand.
- 5 Have you and your staff received training on how to respond to my child's physical and emotional needs during and after a disaster?**
  - Training in responding to emergencies is critical.
  - Find out how the provider will help calm and reassure children, as well as provide first aid.
  - Ask how vital records on children are kept and made available during an emergency.
  - Make the provider aware of your child's special needs.

[childcareaware.org](http://childcareaware.org)

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- 6** Will you teach my child what to do during an emergency?
- Ask what kinds of drills the provider will have to help children follow directions and understand what they are to do.
  - Can parents participate in drills? This can help you learn what steps are being taken and to be comfortable about the plan.
- 7** Do you have a disaster kit or supply kit with enough items to meet my child's needs for at least 72 hours?
- If a kit is not available, ask how you can help get one. Talk and work with other parents.
  - If your child is on regular medication, make sure the provider knows. If possible, provide an extra supply to have on hand, just in case.
- 8** Do the state and local emergency management agencies and responders know about your child care program and where it is located?
- Ensure your provider has spoken with local emergency management agencies and first responders, so they are aware of the location and number and ages of children in the program.
- 9** How may I help you during and after an emergency event?
- Becoming familiar with the way emergencies will be handled will help you see what can be done before and after an event.
  - Volunteer to help your provider prepare by organizing supplies, collecting or getting supplies donated, or organizing a "phone tree" of parents to make calls during or after an emergency.
  - Ask what other kinds of assistance are needed and volunteer.
  - Offer suggestions and solutions if you see needs they have not addressed.
- 10** After an emergency event occurs, how will I be notified about your plan to reopen?
- Ask if there is a phone number, website, or other way the child care program will notify parents of plans to reopen or not. Will you be informed or will it be up to you to contact them?

## Resources for Parents & Child Care Providers on Preparing for Emergencies

### Child Care Aware® of America Emergency Preparedness

Tools, publications, resources, and up-to-date news is available at:

[www.ChildCarePrepare.org](http://www.ChildCarePrepare.org)

### Family Readiness Kit: Are You Prepared for Disasters? (2016)

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) shares this kit to assist families in preparing for most types of disasters. You can find it at:

[www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/disasters\\_family\\_readiness\\_kit.pdf](http://www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/disasters_family_readiness_kit.pdf)

### American Red Cross Emergency Resource Library

Fact sheets, preparedness checklists, recovery guides, and other helpful information to keep you informed and safe can be found at:

[www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies.html](http://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies.html)

### Coping With a Disaster or Traumatic Event

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers a variety of resources to assist families in understanding and coping with traumatic events. Resources include tip sheets, videos, and articles at:

<https://emergency.cdc.gov/coping/index.asp>.

### Sesame Street in Communities

Find lots of great resources for child care providers and families.

[www.sesamestreetincommunities.org](http://www.sesamestreetincommunities.org)

