

Partnering with Families for Child Care Emergency Preparedness

Families put a lot of trust in child care providers every day. Part of that trust is knowing that children will be safe and cared for in any situation, including during and after an emergency. Child care providers who plan ahead are better-prepared and will know what to do to respond to an emergency and keep the children in their care safe. By planning and preparing in advance, they are also able to recover faster after an emergency.

Why should child care providers include families in child care emergency preparedness planning?

Family engagement is important for child care programs to help create strong relationships with families. Those relationships affect all areas of child care, including emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. Partnering with families strengthens the family-child relationship and allows the family to be a key support to their child and the child care program, before, during, and after an emergency.

When families are part of the emergency preparedness process, they understand it better and can be confident that their children are safe in child care. They are also more likely to be supportive of practice drills and other tasks that are required. If families are familiar with a child care program's written emergency plan, they can also help discuss it with their children, so they are more comfortable as well. Families can also supply valuable information about their child that can be useful when preparing for and responding to emergencies.



How can child care providers involve families in child care emergency preparedness planning?



COMMUNICATION

- Share emergency plans
- Maintain up-to-date contact information
- Post practice drill schedules



ENGAGEMENT

- Allow observation of drills
- Identify unique needs
- Encourage families to create their own emergency plan



COLLABORATION

- Ask for help with planning and decision-making
- Discuss families' roles in emergency response

There are many ways to involve families in child care emergency preparedness planning. Some ideas include:



COMMUNICATION:

- Share information with families about why emergency preparedness is important for child care programs.
- Make sure all families have a copy of the written emergency plan.



Include this information in the Family Handbook with expectations about their involvement. Revisit the emergency plan with families throughout the year.

- Familiarize families with the protocol for communication during and after an emergency.
- Provide emergency plan [wallet cards](#) with off-site evacuation location and emergency contact numbers. Ensure parents know the plan for reunification.
- Let families know when practice drills are scheduled. Share information with them afterward to let them know how the drill went.
- Ask families to make sure their emergency contact information is up to date. Offer regular opportunities for them to review and update the information. Make sure there is more than one way to contact families.



During practice drills, randomly choose some of the emergency contacts to call to spot check for responses and accurate information.

- Encourage families to sign up for [emergency alerts](#) so they're aware of emergencies as well.



ENGAGEMENT:

- Work with families to identify any unique needs their child or family might have that would need to be accommodated in emergency planning.
- ! Incorporate preparedness into transitions for children. Talk to families about what the child's new classroom will do differently (if in center-based child care).
- Allow families to observe, or even take part in, a practice drill so they fully understand the process.
- Ask each family to supply any items their child might need in an emergency (extra clothes, medication, comfort items, etc.).
- ! Use the changing seasons to remind families to update their child's clothing, including what they provide for emergency use, to make sure it's appropriate for the weather.
- Encourage families to create their own emergency plan. Support their planning by hosting preparedness events and sending home preparedness resources. ([Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](https://www.cdc.gov) both offer helpful resources for families.)



COLLABORATION:

- Ask families to give input in the development of emergency plans and decision-making related to emergency preparedness.
- Discuss each family's role in the emergency plan and procedures. For example, in the event of an emergency, if they have a long commute and may not be able to pick up their child quickly, what is their plan?
- Give families age-appropriate information about emergency preparedness and practice drills and ask them to reinforce it at home.
- Create a list of items needed to maintain an up-to-date emergency supply kit for the child care program and ask families to donate if they can. Consider asking for [comfort kits](#) as well.



Putting it into Action

Partnering with families is not a one-time event. Including families in emergency preparedness in their child care program should be an ongoing process.

Child care providers can start small by sharing information with families on why emergency preparedness is important and build from there. All families should be invited to participate, including families that have children with diverse needs, such as nonmobile infants; two-year-olds; pre-kindergarten age children; children with disabilities; and children who attend early, late, or part-time.

Child Care Aware® of America has more resources available. Visit [GrowYoungBrains.org](https://www.growyoungbrains.org) for more information on family engagement, and [ChildCarePrepare.org](https://www.childcareprepare.org) for more information on child care emergency preparedness, response, and recovery.

Resources

- [Parents: Is Your Child Care Program Prepared for an Emergency Event?](#) (CCAoA)
- [Child Care Written Emergency Plan Video Series](#) (CCAoA)
- [Preparing for Emergencies: Tips for Families with Young Children](#) (CCAoA and Vroom)
- [Emergency Information Parent Letter \(with Wallet Card\)](#) (Iowa CCR&R)
- [Family Readiness Kit](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics)
- [Make A Plan](#) (Ready.gov)
- [Handling Emergencies](#) (Sesame Street in Communities)

