

CHILDREN & YOUTH IN DISASTERS: PREPARING FOR MISSOURI'S CHILDREN IN STATE CUSTODY OR CONGREGATE CARE SETTINGS





Preparing Your Community

The purpose of this guidebook is to serve as a quick reference that will allow stakeholders in your community to work together to prepare to meet the needs of children who are under the jurisdiction of the court and/or placed in a congregate care facility in your community. It is to be a quick reference and used as a companion document for the *Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide for Child Welfare Agencies*¹ that was published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation in 2009.

The *Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide for Child Welfare Agencies* offers information related to best practices in responding to the needs of children who are served by child welfare agencies. This guide will follow the sections in Part 1 “Mitigation and Preparedness” of the *Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide for Child Welfare Agencies*.

Readers are encouraged to review the resource guide for a broad understanding as well as specific obstacles, recommendations, and resources. The resource guide also provides a more detailed explanation of best practices in responding to the needs of children who are involved with child welfare agencies.

Due to the unpredictable nature of disasters, and the fact that professionals who work with this population are non-traditional emergency planners, planning and responding to the needs of children in state custody and congregate care settings can be overwhelming. Nonetheless, it is our responsibility to facilitate discussions regarding emergency planning and develop a system-wide approach to plan to meet the needs of children who our agencies have been charged to protect. In developing this plan, all phases of a disaster must be considered, including mitigation and preparedness, response and recovery.

This guide is to incorporate the work of local and state agencies in Missouri that are involved in the lives of children in state custody and children in congregate care settings. We will address the roles and responsibilities of each agency and how those roles should be incorporated into a local emergency plan. The plan should be a collaborative effort where the strengths and limitations of each agency are considered.

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Disaster Preparedness Resource Guide for Child Welfare Agencies*, (accessed December 9, 2016); available from <http://www.aecf.org/resources/disaster-preparedness-resource-guide-for-child-welfare-agencies/>.

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Section I: Assess Agency Preparedness and Evaluate Current Disaster Management Plans

The Children's Division has a statewide Emergency Operations Plan that sets forth the ways in which Children's Division staff and management will work together to respond in the event of a disaster. Each Children's Division circuit and licensed resource provider (foster or relative) also has an established emergency plan.

It is likely that courts and other agencies that serve children in state custody, such as residential and detention facilities, also have emergency plans. It is important that each agency is familiar with their own and other agencies' emergency plans. In addition, agencies should have the opportunity to discuss, and ideally exercise, the planned disaster response. This will assist with the development of a coordinated and comprehensive plan that will allow each agency to understand and support each other's efforts in responding to the

needs of youth in state custody and youth in congregate care settings.

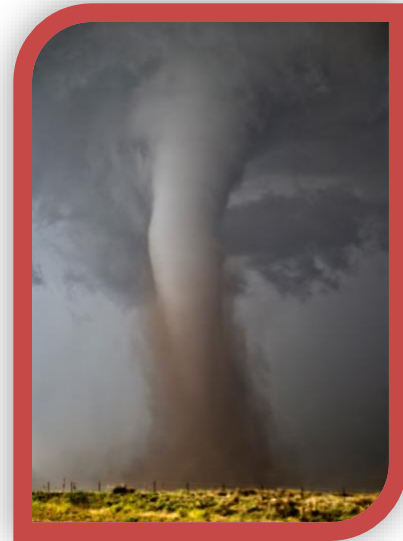
At a minimum, the Family Court, Juvenile Officers, local Children's Division staff, and Children's Division foster care case management agencies should be involved in planning for and developing plans to protect children who are served by child welfare agencies. Administrators from congregate care facilities, including detention facilities, Division of Youth Services, and residential facilities should be included in this discussion. Other agencies that could contribute to planning discussions include the county emergency management director (EMD,) members of the local Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD,) law enforcement, and fire departments.

Items to consider:

- Who are my local stakeholders?
- Who should be at local emergency planning meetings?
- Does my agency have a disaster plan that includes what to do before, during, and after a disaster? If so, what is it?
- Are staff and stakeholders aware of my agency's disaster plan?
- How would court processes related to children in state custody be handled during a disaster?
- Are the needs of children in state custody and other issues related to their care addressed in my agency's disaster plan?
- Are the specific needs of children in state custody or children in congregate care facilities addressed in my community's disaster plan?
- Does your emergency plan take into consideration or plan for the unique medical and mental health conditions of staff?
- Does my community have a COAD? If so, how could my agency work with the COAD?

Section II: Determine Biggest Threats and Consider “All-Hazards”

Each circuit and county should assess their area’s and office’s risk level for all types of disasters. Different types of disasters are outlined below. Agencies should develop an all-hazards plan that can be adapted to various events regardless of scope.



I. Natural

- A. Tornadoes and other weather emergencies – In addition to tornadoes, Missouri is prone to other types of weather emergencies that can cause significant damage.
 1. High-velocity straight-line winds can cause as much damage as tornadoes.
 2. Severe thunderstorms produce heavy rains resulting in flash flooding, hail, lightning strikes that can cause injury or fires, microbursts.
- B. Flooding – Prolonged rain in your area or upstream can result in significant flooding.
- C. Extreme heat and cold – Missouri’s climate can include prolonged periods of high or low temperatures. Either condition can prove dangerous, or even deadly, for those subject to the elements or at greater risk, such as children and the elderly.
- D. Winter storms – Winter ice and snow storms can result in an inability to travel, loss of utilities and danger from the cold.
- E. Wildfire – Controlled burning is a relatively common practice in Missouri and can easily get out of hand, especially in the spring when low humidity and high winds can add to the danger.
- F. Earthquake – Eight of the United States’ earthquake source zones are in the central section of the country, with two located in the State of Missouri. The most active zone is the New Madrid Fault, which runs from northern Arkansas through southeast Missouri and western Tennessee and Kentucky to the Illinois side of the Ohio River Valley. It was the site of a significant series of earthquakes in 1811 and 1812, and makes earthquake planning a necessity in our state.

Other zones affect Missouri because of their close proximity – including the Wabash Valley Fault, Illinois Basin, and the Nemaha Uplift, which runs parallel to the Missouri-Kansas border from Lincoln, Nebraska to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Its earthquakes are not as severe as those in the historic New Madrid fault zone but several have affected Missouri in the past.

- G. Epidemics – These are serious outbreaks of disease that could sicken and kill thousands of people across the country and around the globe.

II. Accidental

- A. Nuclear Power Plant Incidents – Four nuclear facilities or reactors are in a position to pose threats to the public in Missouri under extreme circumstances. Commercial Nuclear Power

Reactors threaten a worst-case scenario of significant radioactive material release that could force evacuation of the general population within a 10-mile radius of the facility. A release of this magnitude could also contaminate food sources out to a 50-mile radius. Reactors are regulated by federal agencies and must ensure the health and safety of the general population within the 10-mile Emergency Planning Zone (EPZ). Missouri Department of Social Services offices in these areas are generally involved in incident planning.

- B. Radioactive Materials Incidents/Chemical Spills – These events can occur during transportation of hazardous materials through the State of Missouri, often by truck or rail. In addition, approximately 20 flights each day from Lambert Airport in St. Louis carry nuclear medicines.
- C. Utility Outages – Utility interruptions and failures most prominently affect the very young or elderly who are at greater risk from loss of heating and cooling systems. They also affect individuals who are dependent upon medical equipment requiring a power source. Loss of communications can also adversely affect provision of emergency services, increasing the difficulty of contacting the services for emergency assistance.
- D. Urban Fire – Structural fires can represent a hazard to any size community, but pose significant planning concerns to those who must be concerned with evacuation of a great number of people housed in a single structure.
- E. Transportation Accident – A mass transportation accident, or even a multi-car pile-up accident, can burden a local jurisdiction's available medical services. It could involve hazardous materials or a fire, compounding the incident. Severe weather could also hamper response efforts.
- F. Dam Failure -- When a dam fails, the pent-up water can be unleashed suddenly and catastrophically affect life and property downstream. Homes, bridges, and roads can be demolished in minutes. Loss of the reservoir can impact water supply.

III. Civil/Political, Terrorist and Security Events

- A. The State of Missouri mitigates against attacks from terrorists, including but not limited to bombings, cyberterrorism attacks, agroterrorism and chemical weapons. The state also mitigates for civil or political unrest that may result in riots, as well as the effects of any hazard at large-scale events where the proximity of large numbers of people create the possibility of greater danger for those involved. (e.g. inaugurations, concerts, 4th of July celebrations, World Series baseball games and championship parades.)



Section III: Allocate Responsibilities to Agency Staff Members

Because disaster situations are inherently chaotic and unpredictable, staff from each agency must understand the agency and individual roles and responsibilities in disaster response. This includes Children's Division staff and contractors, juvenile officers, judges, and detention or residential facility staff. While it is helpful for each agency to have an identified disaster management contact person, it is important to outline an order of succession for disaster response activities since all staff members may not be available or accessible immediately following a disaster. It is recommended that plans identify a minimum of three successors.

It is likely that many agencies and staff will have to balance duties to maintain essential operations and to fulfill responsibilities associated with disaster response. The Missouri Department of Social Services is assigned to the Emergency Support Function #6 - Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services. As a result, local Children's Division staff may assist with emergency mass care activities, such as sheltering for the general population, following a disaster.

An existing relationship with the local Emergency Management Director (EMD) may help to avoid duplication of efforts, and it would allow the EMD to better understand the needs of agencies that serve children in state custody and congregate care.

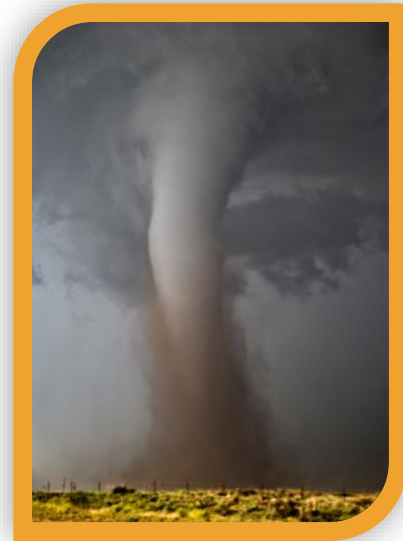
Items to Consider:

- Where do I go to find my agency's plan?
- What will my agency need to do to respond to the needs of children in state custody and congregate care during the disaster?
- What does minimal functioning look like for my agency?
- Who should serve as my agency's disaster management contact person? Should this be tied to an individual or a position?
- What is the order of succession, and are there clear delegations of authority?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of each staff member during a disaster? Are they included in a written plan and are staff members knowledgeable about their roles and responsibilities?
- How should I initiate a conversation with my local Emergency Management Director (EMD) to discuss tools that may be available to my agency that could assist with disaster response (e.g., notification systems, Internet-based communication)?

Section IV: Put Disaster Management Plans in Writing

Each agency and office needs a disaster plan that addresses the resources, needs, and functions of that agency or office. Agency plans must be easy for staff to access, review, and understand. Plans should be reviewed and updated regularly by agency management and staff. Changes or updates to the plan should be shared with stakeholders. Plans should address all phases of disaster, including mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery.

Mitigation takes place prior to the disaster. Mitigation includes efforts to lessen the impact of disaster by preventing loss of life or property. The preparedness phase is to ensure that individuals have practiced and are ready to respond in the event of a disaster. The response phase is the immediate life and property-saving activities that take place after the disaster strikes. The recovery phase refers to the long-term process of individuals returning to a reasonable level of self-sustainability following the disaster.



Items to Consider:

- Where are my agency's disaster plans located?
- Can my agency and/or office create opportunities to regularly review and exercise written disaster plans?
- How often do I need to review my agency's disaster plans with staff or stakeholders?
- How do we plan and account for children in state custody who are placed from outside of the affected area?

Section V: Budget for Disaster Management



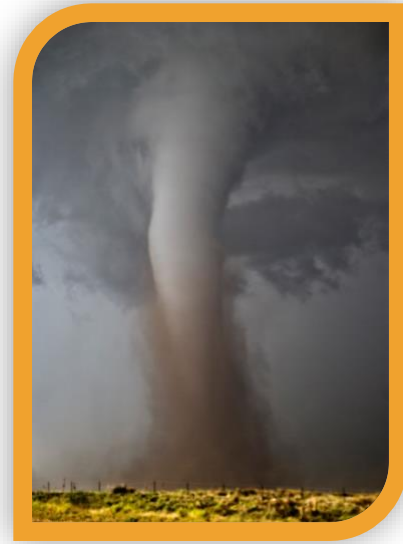
Agencies are encouraged to familiarize themselves with funding sources as part of emergency planning. Resources may be obtained by working with the local Emergency Management Director or by applying for grants.

Items to Consider:

- Are there ways that the needs of children in state custody are addressed in existing emergency plans?
- How do I initiate a conversation with my local Emergency Management Director (EMD) to discuss tools that may be available to my agency to assist with disaster response (e.g., notification systems, Internet-based communication)?
- How do I connect with my EMD and/or local organizations to plan for donations and services?

Section VI: Coordinate Disaster Management with Other Agencies, Providers, and Community Organizations

The importance of coordination, collaboration, and relationship building in planning for, and executing, a disaster plan cannot be overstated. Relationships and partnerships must be established prior to the disaster to increase the likelihood of effective disaster response. Agencies should understand the emergency plans, available resources, and roles of the human service and public safety agencies in the community, specifically as it relates to emergency planning and disaster response. The Missouri Department of Social Services is assigned to the Emergency Support Function #6 - Mass Care, Emergency Assistance, Housing and Human Services. As a result, local Children's Division staff may assist with emergency mass care activities, such as sheltering for the general population, following a disaster.



Items to Consider:

- Am I familiar with the disaster response plans of human service and public safety agencies in my community?
- Am I familiar with the disaster response plans of foster care case management agencies? In what ways are they different than the disaster response plan of the Children's Division or other government agency?
- Does my community have a Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD)? If so, how can my agency become connected with the COAD? If not, how can I work with my Emergency Management Director to form a COAD?
- If there were limited access to courts following a disaster, what alternatives are available for agencies that serve children in state custody to meet immediate needs for (temporary) protective custody, medical treatment, etc.?
- What are the plans to meet the needs of children under the jurisdiction of the court or unaccompanied minors? Are agency stakeholders aware of the plan? Is law enforcement and/or the local Emergency Management Director aware of the plan?
- Will existing Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children and Interstate Compact on Juveniles protocols be sufficient following a disaster when families may be required to evacuate out of state?



Section VII: Prepare to Manage Disasters That Strike an Agency Office

If an agency office is inaccessible or has been evacuated, it can create additional challenges for executing a disaster response plan. To ensure safety and continuity of services, considerations for disasters that may strike an agency office should be included in planning efforts. The safety of children and other visitors to the building during a disaster need to be included in emergency plans. Agency staff should familiarize themselves with the building disaster and evacuation plans.

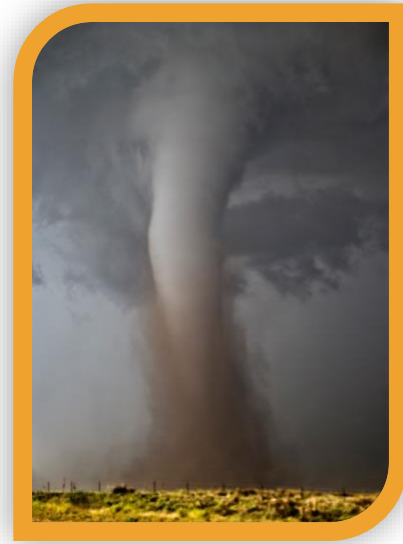
Items to Consider:

- What disasters are most likely to impact my office?
- Are emergency instructions for my building posted in an area where they can be referenced by agency staff and visitors?
- If a disaster strikes my agency's building or office, where will staff go to continue work? How will staff be made aware they are to report to an alternate location?
- Is my agency prepared to shelter-in-place if needed? (Please visit <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/evacuation/shelterinplace.html> for additional information about shelter-in-place.)
- How does the emergency plan for my building/agency fit into the community emergency operations plan? Are there areas where the plans could complement one another?
- Are local law enforcement agencies and fire departments aware of my office/building disaster plan?

Section VIII: Ensure that Families and Providers have Viable Disaster Plans

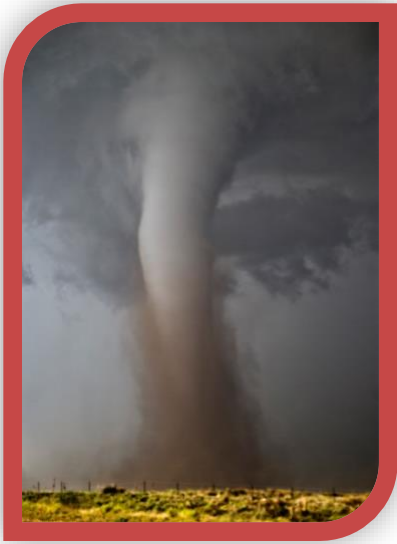
Children's Division policy requires that each licensed resource home has a family emergency plan developed and displayed. This plan is to be reviewed every six months with youth in the home. Because youth in the home may not be familiar with the residence or community, it is important that providers regularly review and discuss the family's disaster plan.

Agency staff should take advantage of opportunities to discuss the importance of emergency preparedness and planning efforts with caregivers, including biological parents, relatives, and resource providers with whom child serving agencies have contact.



Items to Consider:

- Does my agency have a system to ensure that biological families, foster families, and other caregivers have an established disaster plan?
- Do the emergency plans address how the family would evacuate or shelter-in-place?
- Does the emergency plan take into consideration or plan for the unique medical and mental health conditions of household members?
- What can my agency do to help ensure that families have an adequate supply of prescription medication, durable medical equipment, and consumable or other medical supplies in their disaster kits?
- Are you familiar with "Ready in 3" from the Department of Health and Senior Services-a program that promotes emergency planning and preparedness at all levels from individual families to organizations? <http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/>



Section IX: Prepare to Protect the Families of Agency Staff Members Essential to Disaster Response

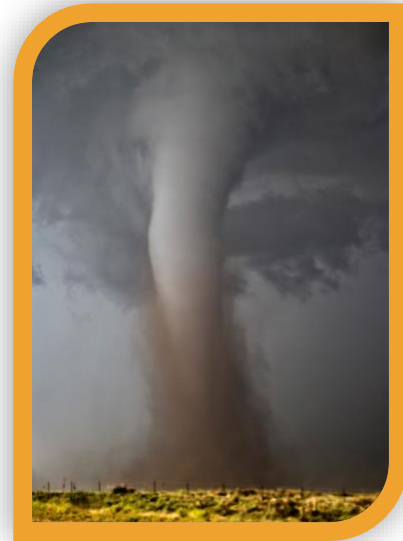
If your agency staff are unwilling or unable to report to work following a disaster due to concerns for their own families, it will limit the agency's ability to implement the disaster plan. Agency staff must know that their loved ones are safe, so they can do the important work to ensure children are safe and cared for during and following the disaster.

Items to Consider:

- Who are the agency staff members essential to disaster response?
- Do staff members understand their role in disaster response?
- Are there things my agency can do to help protect essential staff members' loved ones following a disaster?
- Is an order of succession established in the emergency plan in the event that essential personnel are unable to function in their roles following a disaster?

Section X: Ensure that Agency Staff Members have Viable Personal Disaster Response Plans

Agency staff should be encouraged and supported in their efforts to develop individual and family emergency preparedness plans that will keep their families safe and allow them to return to work. If staff members are concerned about their personal safety or the safety of their families, they will be unable to respond or ineffective in responding to the needs of children, families, or resource providers. Because of their vital role in ensuring that children are accounted for and safe following a disaster, work responsibilities should be considered in the individual and family disaster plans of agency staff.



Agencies may provide staff with resources to help them develop a disaster plan for their families, such as “Ready in 3” (<http://health.mo.gov/emergencies/readyin3/>.) Agencies should emphasize the importance of each staff member having a disaster plan so staff are confident that their loved ones are safe while they respond to the needs of children and families served by the agency.

Items to Consider:

- What can I do to encourage staff to develop personal disaster plans?
- Do staff members know how to contact the agency/office in the event of a disaster?
- What information from a staff member’s personal disaster plan does the agency/office need to be aware of and how will this information be updated?



Section XI: Prepare to Communicate with Agency Staff, Providers, Children, and Families During and After a Disaster

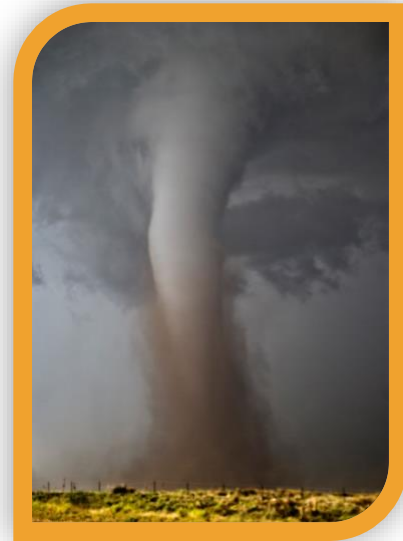
It is important to consider that during a disaster, communication systems may fail. Agencies should identify alternate methods for communication, and these may be incorporated into a local disaster plan. Staff should be aware of alternate communication methods that will allow disaster plans to be enacted and to monitor the safety of staff and individuals served.

Items to Consider:

- Do staff members know how to contact the agency in the event of disaster? Are redundant systems of communication in place?
- Does my agency have alternate communication methods available (e.g., satellite telephones, phone tree, a mass email system, text message blast, social media, local Emergency Operations Center [EOC] radio.) If so, who are they assigned to and where are they maintained?
- Should I have a conversation with my local Emergency Management Director to discuss tools that may be available to my agency to assist with disaster response (e.g., notification systems, Internet-based communication, National Emergency Child Locator Center established by the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children)?
- Who will serve as my agency's Public Information Officer (PIO) or spokesperson? What will that person's responsibilities be?
- How will it be determined what messages will be shared by the PIO or spokesperson?
- How will stakeholders and agencies that serve children in state custody communicate with one another? Is this included in my agency's disaster plan?
- Is my agency familiar with the disaster plans of other agencies that serve children in state custody?
- Where will contact information for staff, resource providers, children, and families be located? How often will it be reviewed and updated?

Section XII: Prepare to Preserve and Access Essential Records During and After a Disaster

It is important that agencies that serve children in state custody and congregate care have access to information to locate children and families and to keep children safe during, and following, a disaster. Protecting essential documents is imperative. Electronic records should include relevant contact and safety information. Collaboration and information sharing between child-serving agencies is encouraged. Considerations for where information is stored and how it will be accessed should be part of each agency's disaster plan.



Items to Consider:

- How will my agency document contacts with children and families during and after a disaster? How will those contacts be shared with interested parties?
- Does agency staff have remote access to records?
- What other agencies may have access to the information I need if my records are unavailable?
- Are there paper records that would be helpful to have available during and after a disaster?
- What processes are in place to preserve essential paper records for a notice and a no-notice event?



Section XIII: Prepare to Serve Children who enter the State Because Of Disasters Elsewhere

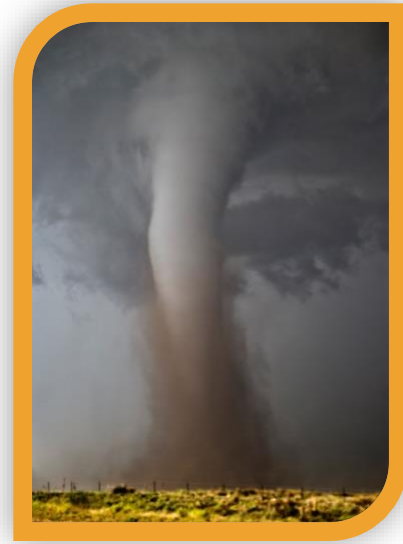
In a large scale disaster, children from other states may be displaced or evacuated to Missouri. Some of the children may be unaccompanied minors and some may be wards of another state. Agencies should be prepared for this possibility and plan for how jurisdiction will be decided. Staff should be familiar with Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC) and/or Interstate Compact for Juveniles (ICJ) protocols and explore how they would be applied to a disaster situation.

Items to Consider:

- Does my agency need to develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with other states to facilitate interstate cooperation?
- How will my agency assist with serving children who are displaced during a disaster?

Section XIV: Practice Disaster Response Plans

Agency staff and leadership must be able to implement the disaster response plan when disaster strikes in order to keep staff, children, and families safe. Practicing disaster response plans increases agency staff members' comfort level and familiarity with the plan. Additionally, gaps or challenges are identified that can then be addressed in the plan. It is important that agency plans are consistent with, and incorporated into, the community disaster plan. Agencies that serve children in state custody or congregate care settings can partner with the local Office of Emergency Management for information about local exercises and to participate in community planning efforts.



Items to Consider:

- What exercises take place within my agency? Are foster parents, the Children's Division, Children's Division contractors, the Juvenile Office, and other stakeholders involved in those exercises?
- What exercises take place in my community?
- How will my agency use and implement key learnings from these exercises?
- What process is in place to evaluate my agency's disaster plan?