

The Road to Readiness

Preparing Your Family for Disasters



Executive Summary

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has long advocated for the needs of infants, children, and adolescents to be considered as something unique and critical to the disaster preparedness plans for any organization, community, state, or nation. Children are not small adults. Pediatricians often provide expertise to communities establishing disaster preparedness plans — but they can also be a resource for families who are establishing their own disaster preparedness plans. The AAP family readiness toolkit “The Road to Readiness: Preparing Your Family for Disasters” is a resource for all families, helping families prioritize their preparedness efforts.

In this toolkit, families will see guidance related to:

- Identifying the risk of natural disasters where they live
- Tips for working with partners in your community to prepare
- Key elements in a disaster preparedness plan, including helpful forms
- What to include in a disaster supplies kit
- Helping children emotionally during and after a disaster
- A list of helpful resources from several trusted sources



[How to Build a Disaster Emergency Kit for Your Family — HealthyChildren.org](#)

The different stops on the road to readiness are intended for all children, including those with special health care needs. This toolkit also includes a section with specific considerations for families with children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN).

As families pass through each stop on this road to readiness, they are encouraged to share their plans with their child’s pediatrician. This is particularly important for families with CYSHCN. Together, families and pediatricians can work to make sure the needs of children are met during and after disasters, helping children to stay healthy, safe, and resilient.

The Road to Readiness: Preparing Your Family for Disasters

Families come in many forms. They can include children, parents, other adult caregivers (eg, grandparents), other relatives or friends, and pets, and anyone else who lives in the same house or community. True family readiness is achieved when a family has prepared and planned together for potential disaster, reducing the stress and danger that can often accompany disasters.

While parents and other adults in the family lead the way, children and adolescents should be involved in planning through age-appropriate activities. When preparing to make the stops on the Road to Readiness, make sure to consider the needs of each family member, including those with special health care needs. Involving everyone in the family during discussions and decisions will help the family to be better prepared for and respond appropriately to disasters.

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What is the Road to Readiness?

The Road to Readiness is the path that families take to learn from preparedness experts — including their child’s pediatrician and medical home, schools, and other parents — to help prepare their family for future disasters. Recent studies and surveys show that:

- In a survey from 2015, 39% of parents say their child’s Head Start/child care center or preschool had experienced an emergency in the past 2 years¹
- 45% of adults shared in 2016 that they felt prepared for a disaster, but another study indicates that adults still have a lack of confidence in the local government’s ability to respond to disasters^{2,3}
- Only modest improvement had been made in household preparedness over 12 years (23% in 2003 to 35% in 2015)²
- Families remain unfamiliar with school or child care disaster plans²

Disasters are unpredictable. Consequently, good planning should be flexible. Instead of attempting to have a detailed plan for every possible situation, a family should have a “toolbox” of preparedness that can be built over time on the Road to Readiness. Another important thing to realize is this “road” does not have a final destination but ideally should be a continual journey with frequent revisions made to the family’s toolbox.

Stops on the Road to Readiness

This roadmap may seem overwhelming at first. While it does require time and some resources to prepare, families will be glad they worked on this when disaster strikes! There are 5 “stops” on the Road to Readiness:

1. [Prepare – What Makes Your Family Unique?](#)
2. [Make a Plan](#)
3. [Build a Kit](#)
4. [After the Disaster: Supporting Mental Wellness](#)
5. [Digging Deeper – More Tools and Resources](#)

Prepare – What Makes Your Family Unique?

Before your family begins designing your disaster preparedness plan, think about what is relevant for your family. When it’s finished, your family’s disaster preparedness plan will include plans for communicating with each other during and after a disaster, especially if you are not together at the time of the disaster. Think about where all your family members are during the day. How easy is it to get in touch with each other? Remember, mobile phones may not work, especially after a natural disaster.

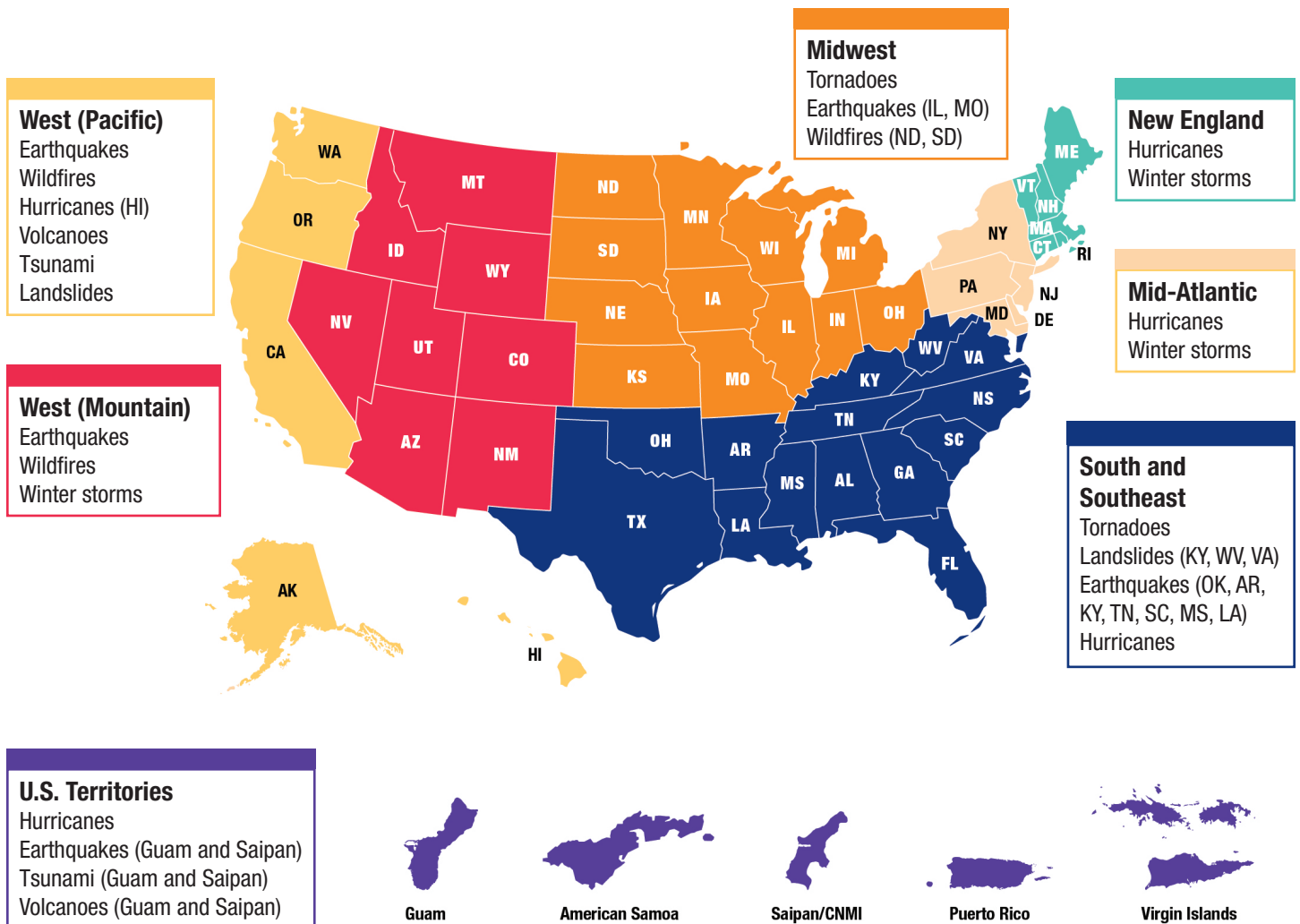
Are certain natural disasters more common in your area? You can look at the map below to see what disasters happen more frequently in your region. Where you live might also impact your evacuation route (eg, if your area floods regularly, you may need to be aware of some roads that are closed more often).

Not all family members will have the same needs during a disaster.

Understanding Your Family’s Natural Disaster Risk

Depending on where you live, you may be at higher risk for certain types of natural disasters. The image on the following page shows which types of natural disasters are most common in different geographic regions. While much of your preparation will apply to many different types of disasters, **specific types of disasters** may also require unique knowledge and skills. The Road to Readiness stops will help families create a solid plan and readiness kit that they can build on to prepare for more specific disasters as they go along. Although each family needs to prepare in its own way, it is important that all families are provided with information that will help them when disaster strikes.

More information on preparing for different types of disasters in each region can be found at: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/common-natural-disasters-across-us.html>.



Source: <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/common-natural-disasters-across-us.html>

The Most Common Natural Disaster Risks in Your Area

Families with disaster preparedness plans and readiness kits are in a better situation to respond to all disasters. Natural disasters, like extreme weather events, are the most common. You can visit the websites listed below to see the special ways that families can prepare for each risk.

- **Wildfires:** <https://www.ready.gov/wildfires>
- **Floods:** <https://www.ready.gov/floods>
- **Tornadoes:** <https://www.ready.gov/tornadoes>
- **Severe Weather:** <https://www.ready.gov/severe-weather>
- **Winter Weather:** <https://www.ready.gov/winter-weather>
- **Hurricanes:** <https://www.ready.gov/hurricanes>
- **Tsunamis:** <https://www.ready.gov/tsunamis>
- **Earthquakes:** <https://www.ready.gov/earthquakes>
- **Volcanic Eruptions:** <https://www.ready.gov/volcanoes#before>

Additional information on the risks for your community, including disasters in progress, can be found on the FEMA website at: <https://www.fema.gov/locations>

Other Disasters That Impact Communities

In addition to natural disasters, there are many other events that may require that you and your family to evacuate or, alternatively, shelter in place. Some of the same plans to keep your family safe in natural disasters can be used for other events, too.

For example, sadly, sudden acts of violence do occur, such as a shooting in a large crowd or other terrorist acts, and these events may require families to evacuate or shelter in place. Other examples of disasters include public health emergencies like pandemics (eg, COVID-19) or hazardous chemical exposures (eg, chemical plant fire or explosion). Again, following the steps on the Road to Readiness is helpful for these events. See the resource section for tools to plan for specific emergencies.

Working with the Whole Family, Neighbors, and Community for Disaster Preparedness

Working with the Whole Family

Have your children help you when preparing your plan and when you are making sure your equipment and kits stay up to date. You know your child best. Involve your children in a way that makes sense for who they are, what they can handle, and what prepares them most. Some examples may include:

- Invite your children to help you or watch when you test the smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors in your home. This gives them a chance to hear what the alarms sound like and they can remind you too! This is the time to talk to them about what they should do if they hear this sound. Smoke alarm and carbon monoxide detector batteries should be changed once a year. Always do this on the same day, such as January 1st. Maybe you can make it one of your family's safety resolutions for each New Year.
- When you check your readiness kit at least every 6 months to ensure items are up to date, include your children in this process so they get familiar with what is in the kit. There are fun ways that children can get involved with building the kit. Get some ideas at Ready.gov at <https://www.ready.gov/kids/build-kit-game>. Show your kids where the fire extinguisher is and how to use it.
- Practice your Family Disaster Plan with all members of your household involved.
- Use the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Ready Wrigley Activity Books to help prepare your kids for disasters. The Ready Wrigley Activity Books can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/orr/readywrigley/index.htm>
- Pets are part of the family too. Find tips for making a disaster plan for your pets on this website: <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/pet-disaster-preparedness>. Keep pets collared and/or chipped. Pets tend to get scared during times of chaos and will act out of character and potentially run away.

Working with Your Neighbors

- Volunteer with your homeowner's association or neighborhood crime watch. Ask what they do for disasters.
- Talk with your neighbors. Learn who has special skills such as doctors, nurses, and fire fighters.
- Find out who has special needs and may need extra help such as elderly or disabled persons.

Working with Your Community

- Check with your local fire department to see if they offer Community Emergency Response Team training. More can be found on these teams at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/individuals-communities/preparedness-activities-webinars/community-emergency-response-team>.
- Take a Red Cross First Aid and CPR class. Information can be found on the Red Cross website at <http://www.redcross.org/m/take-a-class/#arcmobile>.
- Download the Red Cross Emergency App to your phone before the disaster. This is a free app that you can download on your children's phone too. It will send text alerts for watches or warnings in your area and provide up-to-date information on sheltering operations.

Make a Disaster Preparedness Plan for Your Family

A good disaster preparedness plan will help your family be ready for disasters and reduce the stress and danger that can often accompany disasters. At this second stop on the Road to Readiness, there are 4 important things to think about to make a good plan:

- **Communication** — How will family members talk to each other, especially if family members are not together when a disaster occurs?
- **Reunification** — How will a family come back together if members are separated during a disaster?
- **Evacuation and Transportation:** — How will the family get from one place to another during a disaster? This can be especially important for families with children and other members who need special transportation (eg, child uses a wheelchair to move around).

Communication

During a disaster, communication may be interrupted, and therefore, it's important to talk about this with all the members of your family and support system **before** the disaster happens.

- If you have warning that a disaster will strike, such as a weather-related event or wildfire, make sure everyone's phones, and ideally computers and tablets, are charged.
- Talk about which disasters could happen in your area.
 - Let children hear what the different danger or warning signals sound like (eg, fire alarm, tornado siren). Ways to do this are found at https://www.weather.gov/unr/Warning_Systems.
 - Teach children what the different danger or warning signals sound like (fire alarm, tornado or tsunami siren, etc) and what to do if they hear that warning signal. This website has descriptions that can help: <https://www.weather.gov/sjt/WatchWarningAdvisoryExplained>.
 - Make sure all family members know where you keep a list of contacts, such as family members not in your household, emergency contacts, doctors' and veterinary offices, and the pharmacy. Consider having putting a list of the most relevant contacts on your child's mobile phone.
 - Teach your child about 9-1-1 — or the equivalent in your area — and when to call this number.
 - Make sure school-aged children know about their school's disaster plans and what that will mean in terms of being able to talk to each other.
 - For the children in your family who have mobile phones, install your community's weather and hazard alert apps and teach your children how to use them. Consider including any medical-related conditions or personal medications in the emergency medical ID options so others can access if needed.
 - When old enough, teach your children their parents' full names, phone numbers, and addresses.
- Share your child's medical history/needs, contact information for medical providers, and emergency contact information with their school, child care or after-school program, sports teams, and summer/day camps. Consider including any medical related conditions or personal medications in the emergency medical ID options of your child's mobile phone, too.
- Give your child and the people who could be helping them during a disaster the information they need to contact you. Consider using this Backpack Emergency card (http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readywrigley/documents/backpack_emergency_card.pdf) or Child ID card (<http://identakid.com>). Place a copy of this card in your child's kit or backpack and/or on your child's phone. (Your state may have a process to obtain a child ID card.)
- Take and store photographs on your phone, including all forms of identification and insurance cards for your family. Consider having a hard copy of this information on you at all times, in case you can't find your phone.
- During a disaster, cellular mobile phones may not work for calls — but texting and social media may still work. Make sure all family members know how to text. If your child has access to social media, make a plan for family members to send updates to the same social media platform. Remind all family members that just because you send a message (especially a text or email message), you cannot assume it was received unless you get a reply.
- Prepare emergency communication options when phones, cell towers, and internet go down. Handheld radios can become familiar to many families, for example, who go skiing or hiking. They can be fun for children to learn about and play with in the neighborhood and can be used in a disaster or other emergency when usual communications methods are down or overloaded. Handheld radios require no license, there are no service fees, and they are inexpensive (a family 4 pack is about \$40.00) and use standard AA batteries.

- Make hard copy lists of important phone numbers in case a cell phone is lost or destroyed. Keep more than 1 copy and place them in things such as a wallet, car dash compartment, etc.
- Choose an out-of-state family “check-in” member and make sure everyone in the family knows how to contact them. Make sure your contact knows to expect these calls!

Reunification Plan

Being separated from your child during a disaster, especially if you do not know where they are, is one of the most stressful events a parent might experience. Advanced planning and preparing your child will help your family reunite as quickly as possible.

What is reunification?

“Reunification” is used to describe the process of reconnecting children with their parents or guardians after a disaster. Because children and adolescents can be separated from their families while at school, child care, after-school programs, sports events, and summer/day camps, there needs to be a way to reunite them if a disaster occurs while they are apart. Additional tips can be found in the AAP Reunification Toolkit (<https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/AAP%20Reunification%20Toolkit.pdf>).

Making reunification plans

After thousands of children were separated from their families during Hurricane Katrina in 2005, 2 new national programs were created to help families reunite after disasters. Even though we now have the Unaccompanied Minors Registry (<https://youth.gov/federal-links/unaccompanied-minors-registry>), which is activated when there is a national disaster, it is important for every family to have a plan and prepare their children for what to do if they are separated during a disaster. Families can also adopt several helpful practices into their regular lives that will aid them tremendously in disaster events. Here are steps families can take:

- Talk with your child’s school, child care program, after-school program, sports teams, and summer/day camps about their reunification plan. If they do not have one, consider requesting that the school board or local Emergency Management agency create one. Share this information with your child, too.
- Create a family “password” and teach them to only go with adults who know this special word or phrase.
- If you are going to a crowded place, make sure all cell phones are fully charged before you arrive, take a picture of your child that day, write your phone number on a piece of your child’s clothing or a bracelet or lanyard for them or those helping them to reference if they are lost. When you first arrive, establish an easily found spot where you will meet if separated. Teach children that if they are separated from you, they should look for someone who appears to be in charge, like a police officer or a safe person your family has identified.
- If your child is lost, contact a local law enforcement agency immediately. Give them as much information as possible about your child including their age, height, weight, and hair and eye colors and what they were wearing.

Evacuation and Transportation Plan

Families will need to plan on how to evacuate together or, if separated, how to use transportation to get back together. A good evacuation and transportation plan will look at different scenarios. Some things to consider include:

- Let child care or school staff know who can pick your child up if you are not able to do so. Let your kids know about this back-up plan and remind everyone in the family of both the family “password” and who is on the safe list of people approved to pick up for child care or school.
- Know your evacuation routes as well as alternate routes.
- Know the shelter options that meet your family’s needs — such as medical, family size, and pets. Your shelter might be in the area — at neighbor or family members’ house or at a shelter that you find using a tool like the Red Cross Shelter App (<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps.html>). If possible, also identify a friend or relative’s place that is far away (hundreds of miles) where you and your family could stay if the local conditions are not safe. Print directions to this location that consider the different evacuation routes available and keep these in your car and in your disaster kit. Determine what will be involved for your family to travel to that location.
- More guidance for families with children with medical complexity or special health care needs can be found in the section below with tips for CYSHCN.

Building a Disaster Preparedness Kit for Your Family

The third stop on the Road to Readiness is building a disaster preparedness kit. Adding items to your kit should be done over time with the “should haves” added first and the “could haves” added later. Your kit should be stored in a large bin and/or duffle bag with the contents listed on a piece of paper with your kit and on your phone. Place it somewhere easy to find and remember to review the contents at least every 6 months (set a reminder in your phone or on your calendar), because some items, like food, water, batteries, and medications may need to be replaced. Remember, you might not need to buy a lot of new things. These might be items you already have.

The items below fall into 3 categories: 1) Food/water, 2) Supplies, and 3) Information.

Should Haves: Start with these items first

- Food/water
 - Water for 3 days (about 1 gallon per person per day)
 - Nonperishable food that doesn't need to be cooked like energy bars, canned vegetables, granola bars for 3 days
 - Consider buying ready-to-eat meals or special dehydrated foods for your kit. Consider buying 1 or 2 extra to sample ahead of time. This can help kids with the natural temptation to break into them when it is not an emergency!
- Supplies
 - Medications, especially prescription medications (2-week supply if possible)
 - First aid supplies like Band-Aids, antibiotic ointment, elastic bandages
 - Flashlight with extra set of batteries (remember to store batteries separately)
 - Blankets
 - Change of clothes, including shoes (at least 1 full change per person)
 - Diapers/baby wipes if needed
 - Pet food and supplies if needed
 - Duct tape
 - Pocket knife
 - Cell phone charger
 - Toilet paper and other sanitary products
 - Ziplock bags/trash bags
 - Weather/Emergency broadcast radio (hand-crank version, if possible; if not, have an extra set of batteries)
- Information
 - Printed copies of key information (consider storing in a water-resistant bag):
 - Medical insurance cards
 - Critical medical records, including a list of all current medications with details on strength and doses for each family member
 - Contact information for your pediatrician and other doctors or healthcare providers.
 - Current photos of all family members and pets (including a photo of all members of the family together).
 - **Note:** There are some sample forms that families can use to make sure they have important medical information:
 - Emergency information form (see the appendix for a printable version or find this online at https://downloads.aap.org/HC/HC_AAP-emergency-information-form-download.pdf).
 - Some families may consider an online template for emergency medical information. There are apps (eg, Mejo) but families should pay close attention, however, to privacy and data sharing policies for the app or online storage platform.

Could Haves: These items you might add over time.

- Food
 - Canned food
 - Can opener

- Supplies
 - Battery-powered lantern and/or hand crank flashlight or solar-powered flashlight
 - Small generator (NOTE: It is critically important that families know how to safely use a generator. Never use a generator inside your home, basement, or garage or less than 20 feet from any window, door, or vent. Use an extension cord that is more than 20 feet long to keep the generator at a safe distance.) Read more at <https://www.cdc.gov/disasters/cofacts.html>.
 - Fire extinguisher
 - Water filter and/or water purification supplies
 - Disinfectant wipes
 - Toiletry supplies (eg, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, toothpaste and toothbrush)
 - Activity books/board games
 - Solar powered charger
 - Camping stove, with fuel (ONLY use outside)
- Information
 - A financial plan such as those suggested at <https://www.redcross.org/content/dam/redcross/get-help/pdfs/disasters-and-financial-planning-guide.PDF> or <https://www.ready.gov/financial-preparedness>

Make it Easier to Build Your Family's Disaster Preparedness Kit

Remember, you might have lots of these items already on hand! If not, think about these tips:

- Start small — buy 1 or 2 extra cans of food on each shopping trip and set aside
- Check at thrift or discount stores for nonperishable items and other supply items
- Put emergency supplies on your “wish list” for gift-giving occasions (eg, batteries/flashlights make great stocking-stuffers)

Visit www.ready.gov or www.redcross.org for more information about building a supply kit.

“Wish list” ideas

Help your families and friends help you get ready for an emergency. If your family exchanges gifts for birthdays and holidays, here are some ideas for your “wish lists”!

- **Certificates for hotels** in case you have to stay away from your home
- **Storage containers** for home supplies or go-kits
- **Wagon or dolly** to transport supplies in case of evacuation
- **Go-kit supplies (see page)** such as solar chargers, batter, special medical supplies, extra glasses, walkie talkies, solar blankets, wind up radio, ready-to-eat meals or special dehydrated foods, flashlights, batteries
- **Cash** for including in an emergency kit

A few tips for families with children and youth with special health care needs

- Make sure you have information on your child's specific medical conditions in one place. Consider using the Emergency Information Form for Children with Special Health Care Needs (see https://downloads.aap.org/HC/HC_AAP-emergency-information-form-download.pdf) or other options from a trusted organization in your own community. Keep a copy in your child's readiness kit, your car, and give to others who care for your child (school, day care, etc).
- Write down your “talking points” about your child's disability/needs to share with first responders or shelter staff. There are many templates online to guide you; here is one sample from Oregon Family to Family Health Information Center can be found here: <https://www.ohsu.edu/sites/default/files/2021-04/OPP%20template%2006-10-20%20with%20notes.pdf>. Another sample can be found on the medical home portal here: <https://www.medicalhomeportal.org/>.
- If your child will wear them, consider Medical ID bracelets. Put emergency contact info on labels and affix to things your child has with them, such as their wheelchair, wallet, backpack, etc.
- If your child depends on specialized transportation, ask your transportation company what options you have if that service is not available.

- If you know that any of your children will require a shelter that can provide medical care, get a list of specific destinations that will be prepared to their needs.
- Have the phone number or app of at least one state or disabilities service entity. Make sure you and your children have the up-to-date information you need to meet any special health care needs of your children.
- Listen to local authorities. When they say it is time to, you should evacuate. Think about if you should leave earlier than typical families because of the extra time it may take to transport children with special needs.
- Review the disaster preparedness kit section of this toolkit to plan for specific supplies your family will need to bring with you. This might include:
 - Your own power supply for medical equipment, if needed
 - Special food and water supplies, such as:
 - Special formula, thickeners
 - Feeding supplies (g-tube extensions, buttons, syringes, etc)
 - Other special supplies, such as:
 - Incontinence supplies (eg, diapers, ostomy bags, chucks/underpads, gloves)
 - Items for comfort and calming (eg, sensory toys, “loveys”)
 - Ventilator supplies
 - Supplies or equipment for transporting
 - Communication devices or cards
- For more information: <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/disasters-and-children/professional-resources-for-disaster-preparedness/preparedness-for-children-and-youth-with-special-health-care-needs>

Disasters and Mental Wellness

It is important to tell children in simple language about possible disasters when there is a clear and present danger. Talk matter-of-factly about examples of what could happen during a disaster. For example, warn your children that the lights or heat might go off, and that your mobile phones might stop working, and let them know that you have a plan for what to do if these things happen. See the section on planning for Communication for more tips.

Understanding How Children Respond to a Disaster

Children respond differently to disasters than adults. Sometimes it is difficult to tell if, or how, severely the child has been affected. Here are some common issues for children and tips for how parents can help them cope.

Disasters and the Impact on the Daily Routines and Relationships of Children

Disasters disrupt our lives in a variety of ways. All disasters — big or small — can change our routines and interactions with others. From school closures to the need to stay in a shelter, children’s daily routines may go through several changes. Children rely on their routines and their interactions with familiar other people (eg, teachers, other students, friends, and extended family members). Changes to these routines and regular social contacts can lead to anxiety symptoms and other problems. Parents and caregivers should assist children to return to a routine and provide them with access to consistent relationships and familiar roles (eg, student, classmate, friend, grandchild) as soon as possible following an event. This can help children adjust and cope with the effects of the disaster and restore a sense of getting back to normal.

A Child’s Imagination and Fear

A child’s imagination is a beautiful thing. However, this imagination can lead to fear and worry during and after a disaster. Parents who stay calm and provide reassurance may help children feel more comfortable. It is important to be honest about the situation though, keeping in mind each child’s age and maturity.

After a disaster, it is common for children to be afraid that:

- The event will happen again
- Someone they care about will be injured or killed
- They will be separated from their family
- They will be left alone

After a disaster, parents should make every effort to let children know what to expect next. Reassure children when the event is over and tell them as much as is known about family, friends, pets, and significant others.

Common Behaviors after a Disaster

After a disaster, a child may have changes in their behavior. There are some behavior changes that are more common:

- A quiet, caring child who usually listens well to parents might become loud, noisy, and aggressive
- A child who is usually outgoing might become shy and afraid
- A child may be very upset over the loss of a favorite toy, blanket, teddy bear, or other items
- A child has nightmares or becomes afraid to sleep alone or with the light off
- A child may become increasingly clingy and cry and whine more than usual
- A child may revert to younger behavior, such as bedwetting and thumb sucking

Children's Psychological Needs After a Disaster

The psychological effects that a child experiences as the result of a disaster might remain even after the event has passed. Children can continue to show signs of psychological stress or trauma such as difficulty sleeping, nightmares, or having frequent thoughts about what happened. Some children may not exhibit signs of distress for weeks to months after the disaster, and some may never show such signs. It is important for parents to closely observe children's behavior and listen to their concerns. By recognizing problems quickly, parents can access professional resources for their child.

How Parents Can Help Children Cope After a Disaster

- Parents can model through their own words and actions to reassure children they are as safe as possible during the disaster.
- Parents will need to care for their own emotional well-being during and after the disaster, as much as possible, to be able to support their children.
- Remind children that it is okay to be afraid. They do not need to be brave or tough, and it is okay to cry. Listen to what children are saying about their concerns and fears, repeating it back to them to make sure you understand what they are saying. Be accepting of their feelings and allow them to work through them at their own pace.
- Include them in recovery efforts. Give them tasks that they can safely do to empower them and help them believe in themselves.
- While many things will be out of their control, point out the things they can control, like simple things such as what to wear, to eat, or what bed to sleep in.
- Allow them to change their routines, such as keeping on a hallway light while they sleep, for as long as needed after the disaster.
- Find ways to continue to reassure them of your continuing parental role to love and protect them.
- Remind them of their ability to get through whatever is happening and that you believe in them.
- Monitor use of electronic devices for yourself and your children. If younger children, in particular, see pictures or hear stories of the disaster, they may think the disaster is still happening. Talk them and give them clear, correct information to assure them they are as safe as possible.
- Consider letting your child's teachers and physicians know about you and your child's concerns.

Some Helpful Activities to Support Mental Health

Children should be encouraged to spend time thinking about what happened and talking it over with a close adult as a way of processing what happened and making sense of it together. Children can process disaster-related events in creative yet simple ways:

- Ask children if they would like to create any art about what happened to them and your family. This may show their thoughts and feelings about the event and their experience. If you are concerned about anything you notice in the child's artwork, please consult with a professional such as a pediatrician, psychologist, counselor, or teacher.

- Ask children if they would like to write a story about the event. For example, start with:
 - “Once upon a time, a big ____ came, and it scared us all. This is what happened:”
 - Make sure to end the story with how their lives are now — their new way of living. For example, “...Now we are living with Grandma and Grandpa and are looking for a new house.”
- Distract children through positive and fun activities.
- Sing or create music with your children.
- Spend time outside together being physically active and getting natural sunlight; go to a playground at a park, kick a soccer ball, play catch, or go on a hike.
- Get together with friends or extended family members; talk about good memories and reminisce and build new memories.
- Be mindful of how you practice or discuss the potential for future disasters but don't avoid this discussion. Your family should practice their preparedness plan every 6 months.

Tools and Resources for Families to Support Disaster Preparedness

For families who want to learn more and be as prepared as possible, the following resources can be helpful additions to the materials in the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) Family Readiness Toolkit.

Please note: Listing of resources does not imply an endorsement by the AAP. The AAP is not responsible for the content of external resources. Information was current at the time of publication. The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual, local, or other facts and circumstances.

All Disasters

- AAP. Emergency Information Form. [https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/EIF%20\(Blank%20Form\).pdf](https://downloads.aap.org/AAP/PDF/EIF%20(Blank%20Form).pdf)
- AAP. Reunification for Families. <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/reuniting-with-your-children-after-a-disaster.aspx>
- American Red Cross. Mobile Apps. <http://www.redcross.org/get-help/prepare-for-emergencies/mobile-apps>
- American Red Cross. Training and Certification. <http://www.redcross.org/m/phssmrd/take-a-class#arcmobile>
- CDC. Backpack Emergency Card. http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readywrigley/documents/backpack_emergency_card.pdf
- CDC. Ready Wrigley Activity Books. <http://www.cdc.gov/phpr/readywrigley>
- CDC. Reunification. <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/reunification.html>
- Do One Thing. Monthly Reminders: Getting Prepared. <https://www.do1thing.com>
- Humane Society. Make a Disaster Plan for Your Pets. http://www.humanesociety.org/issues/animal_rescue/tips/pets-disaster.html
- Lane County Government (Oregon). 12-week Checklist to Get 2-weeks Ready. <https://www.lanecounty.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=3585881&pageId=5818424>
- NCTSN. Trinkia and Juan — Tip Sheets to Help Children Cope with Different Disasters. <https://www.nctsn.org/search?query=trinka+juan>
Also available in English, Spanish.
- NCTSN and Piplo Productions. Trinkia and Sam — Tip Sheets to Help Children Cope with Different Disasters. <https://piploproductions.com/stories/trinka-and-sam>
Also available in English, Spanish.
- Oregon Office of Emergency Management. My Pocket Plan: Family Emergency Action Plan. https://www.oregon.gov/oem/Documents/15023_OEM_Pocket%20Planner_2018-web.pdf
Also available in English, Spanish, Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese.
- Ready Squirrel. FRS Radio: Easy-to-use emergency communication. <https://readysquirrel.com/frs-radio>
- Ready.gov. Family Communication Plan. https://www.ready.gov/sites/default/files/2019-06/family_communications_plan_kids.pdf

- Ready.gov. Financial Preparedness. <https://www.ready.gov/financial-preparedness>
Also available in English, Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Chinese, Arabic.
- Ready.gov. Hazardous Materials Incidents. <https://www.ready.gov/hazardous-materials-incidents>
- Ready.gov. Preparedness web site of the U.S. Government. <https://www.ready.gov>
- Ready.gov. Preparing Your Pets for Disasters. <https://www.ready.gov/pets>
Also available in English, Spanish, French, Haitian Creole, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Chinese.
- Ready.gov. STEP: Student Tools for Emergency Planning. <https://www.ready.gov/kids/student-tools-emergency-planning-step>
- Save the Children. “10 Tips” Series. <http://www.savethechildren.org/GetReady>
- American Red Cross/FEMA. Prepare with Pedro. <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/teaching-kids-about-emergency-preparedness/prepare-with-pedro.html>
- FEMA. Mobile app. <http://www.fema.gov/mobile-app>

Severe Weather

- NOAA. Severe Weather Preparedness. <http://www.noaa.gov>
- Ready.gov. Severe Weather Preparedness. <https://www.ready.gov/severe-weather>

Terrorism

- American Red Cross. Terrorism — Preparing for the Unexpected. <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/terrorism.html>
- American Red Cross. Terrorism — Safety Tips. <https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/types-of-emergencies/terrorism.html>
- Dept of Homeland Security. If You See Something, Say Something. <https://www.dhs.gov/see-something-say-something>
- Save the Children. Safe and Sound. <https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/emergency-prep/GRGS-VIOLENCE-EMERGENCIES-TIPS.PDF>

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3. Federal Emergency Management Agency. National Household Survey on Disaster Preparedness Survey. Updated November 28, 2022. Accessed December 22, 2022. Available at: <https://community.fema.gov/PreparednessConnect/s/article/Results-from-the-2022-National-Household-Survey-on-Disaster-Preparedness>