



Disaster Preparedness



Planning for Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs

Disasters, both natural and man made, can happen with little or no advance warning. For families with children and youth who have special health care needs (CYSHCN) planning for a disaster becomes even more difficult. Families of CYSHCN must take into account special medications, equipment, and supplies – things that a typical family may not need.

The following bulleted lists have been developed to help families with CYSHCN prepare for a disaster.

For your child or youth with special health care needs . . .

- Develop a plan that describes your child’s daily care routines.
- Complete an emergency information form or health care summary that includes the names and contact information for your child’s primary health care provider and specialists.
- Have on hand a 2-week supply of medications (prescription and non-prescription).
- Store a 2-week supply of equipment and supplies (such as tracheotomy tubes, nasal cannulas, suction catheters, diapers, dressing materials, feeding tube bags and tubing, etc.).
- Store a 2-week supply of food, including foods for special diets.
- Purchase battery back-up or a generator for any equipment that requires electricity.
- Identify a pre-planned location to shelter your child during a disaster.
- Store extra supplies to help care for your child should a disaster occur while he/she is at school or with a childcare provider.
- Notify neighbors and emergency medical services providers that you have a child with special health care needs and may need additional assistance during a disaster.

For your family . . .

- Develop a family disaster plan (go to: www.red-cross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0_79_,00.html for more information on developing a family disaster plan).
- Collect and store at least three days of disaster supplies (go to: www.fema.gov/plan/prepare/pubs.shtm for more information on making a disaster supply kit).
- Select family meeting places, including one place in your neighborhood and a second place outside your neighborhood should you need to evacuate the area.

- Identify a central point of contact, such as a relative or friend that lives outside the area, if the family becomes separated during a disaster.
- Make plans for pets in your home.

For your home and neighborhood . . .

- Learn how to turn on and off electricity, gas, and water in the house.
- Identify any large trees or outdoor furniture that could damage the house.
- Purchase a fire extinguisher for each floor of your home.
- Tie down or store items that might move during violent storms.
- Routinely check the battery of your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Avoid rooms with large windows during violent storms.
- Identify alternate escape routes from your house in case the front door is blocked.
- Develop a plan with neighbors on how you will assist one another in case of a disaster.

Whether you are forced to evacuate or are confined to your home, the key to preparing for a disaster is to plan ahead and have the family work together as a team. Family members should review and practice the disaster plan. Discuss how a disaster can affect all family members and how your plan will help the special needs of the child with a disability.

Young children should be taught how and when to call 9-1-1 or their local emergency number. Introduce them to emergency workers (police, fire, and emergency medical services providers). Use pictures and books to explain what they may look like and their role in helping people during an emergency.

Other Resources . . .

For more information about disaster planning, go to: www.mchb.hrsa.gov/emsc/ProductsAndResources.aspx and select the key word "Public education – General" to find resources in English and Spanish. Additional resources can be found on the following Web sites:

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
www.ready.gov/america/getakit/disabled.html

Federal Emergency Management Agency
www.fema.gov/kids

American Red Cross
www.redcross.org/services/prepare/0,1082,0_79_,00.html

