



**CDSS**

California Department of  
Social Services



Child Care Advocate Program

**DISASTER PLANNING  
Self-Assessment Guide for  
CHILD CARE CENTERS and  
FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES**



COMMUNITY CARE LICENSING DIVISION  
“Promoting Healthy, Safe and  
Supportive Community Care”  
**COMMUNITY CARE LICENSING DIVISION**

## **CHILD CARE ADVOCATE PROGRAM**

### ***DISASTER PLANNING GUIDE FOR CHILD CARE HOMES AND CENTERS***

This Disaster Planning Guide can serve as a planning tool for Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers. Title 22 Regulations (Section 102417 (g) (9) for Family Child Care Homes and Section 101174 (a) for Child Care Centers) require that every facility develop and implement a disaster and mass casualty plan. Rather than being all-inclusive, this Guide provides basic disaster preparedness and emergency planning information that can be customized to fit the size and population of your facility and its needs. All facilities must include a written disaster plan in their plan of operation. Californians are no strangers to emergencies and disasters. In recent years, child care programs have sustained major disaster-related damage, requiring temporary closure, evacuation and relocation of vulnerable populations of children. Facilities that have followed the steps toward preparedness and planning will be better able to protect lives and property with the ability to return to a normal operation in a shorter time period.

Where your facility is located and the specific disaster threats in the community in which you operate are extremely important in developing your disaster preparedness and response plans. Local city emergency coordinators, fire, law enforcement, and public works departments can assist you in your determination of potential disaster threats, and in determining the threat of hazards immediately close to your facility. Also, in recognition of the special threat that earthquakes pose in California, the Legislature enacted Health and Safety Code Section 1596.867 which requires you to include an Earthquake Preparedness Checklist (LIC 9148) as an attachment to your disaster plan. This Checklist is not reviewed by licensing and is not a requirement to be licensed, but it is a useful tool in earthquake preparedness planning.

#### **Reducing the Potential Threat of Disasters and Emergencies**

Take the time to inspect your facility both inside and outside as well as the surrounding area around the facility for potential danger or disasters that may exist. Major threats during an earthquake are from falling objects from high places, furniture and equipment that is not secured, broken or flying glass, and severed or broken electrical lines, natural gas lines, and flooding from broken plumbing. The threat of fire is increased when flammable materials are not stored safely and there are trees and brush that are close to or touching the building. Potential damage from flooding is great for facilities with poor drainage, clogged or obstructed storm drains and rain gutters or located in low-lying or flood prone areas. This inspection may also help you find existing licensing violations and help you avoid future citations.

1. Maintain a current and accessible written evacuation plan available with at least two unobstructed escape routes.
2. Ensure that matches, lighters, and flammable liquids are inaccessible to children.
3. Regularly clean and check heating, cooling, gas and electrical systems and verify that they are in good working order.

4. We suggest providing one or more carbon monoxide detectors, in addition to regular maintenance and checks of required smoke detectors.
5. Maintain fire extinguishers in kitchens and other areas, and ensure that they are properly charged mounted, and easy to reach in case of fire.
6. Train staff and family members on how to properly use a fire extinguisher.
7. Replace numerous electrical plugs and cords with safe electrical outlet sources, such as permanent outlets or strip outlet connectors with circuit breakers.
8. Secure water heaters, refrigerators, tall and heavy cabinets and furniture.
9. Check to be sure that all gas appliances have strong and flexible connections.
10. Remove or secure heavy objects on high shelves and counters.
11. Provide safety latches or locks on cabinets to keep contents inside.
12. Ensure that aquariums, wall hangings, pictures, and other potentially hazardous displays are secured and located away from seating/sleeping/play areas.
13. Check for any obstructions that prevent safe exit from the facility, such as window security bars.

### **PREPARDNESS** **WATER**

1. Provide an adequate supply of drinking water to last the staff and children a minimum of 72 hours (1/2 gallon per child and 1 gallon per adult per day). Additional water will be needed for sanitation.
2. Locate the water supplies in areas that are easy to reach in case of a disaster or emergency.
3. Use commercial water purifiers or disinfectants, date the water supply, and change it at least once per year to keep it fresh. Note: Water can be purified for storage by adding 8 drops of unscented chlorine bleach to every one gallon of water.

### **Food**

1. Maintain a dated 72-hour emergency supply of food that does not require refrigeration and can be kept for long periods of time. Choose foods that are

appropriate for the ages of children and that children are most likely to eat.

2. Store the emergency food supplies in areas that are safe, secure and easy to reach in most disasters.
3. Date all stored emergency food and plan to use and replace it on a regular basis
4. Maintain a supply of disposable eating utensils and a non-electrical can opener.
5. Document if you are caring for children with diabetes, allergies, or a special medical condition or need, and keep an emergency supply of their medications or other health supplies.

### **Emergency Supplies**

1. Maintain at least a three - day supply in the six basic areas (water, food, first aid, clothing and bedding, tools and emergency supplies, and special items). Don't forget formula and special food for infants, including diapers and other sanitation supplies.
2. Make sure you have enough small and large first aid supplies, and portable first aid kits that can be easily taken outside in case of immediate evacuation.
3. Keep on hand portable radios with extra batteries.
4. Store extra batteries for the facility's smoke and carbon monoxide detectors and multiple flashlights so that each room has one.
5. Maintain an adequate supply of personal hygiene and sanitation supplies, including toilet paper and paper towels. Instruct staff to keep their own personal necessity items safely stored at the facility.
6. Store extra bedding and blankets to provide warmth and comfort if outdoors or inside if utilities fail.
7. Consider making provisions for portable toilets, tarps/canopies, and some sort of temporary shelter structure in case you need to keep everyone outside.
8. Large child care programs will need equipment and supplies for search and rescue, such as shovels, crowbars, hard hats, stretcher, and flashlights.
9. Maintain a minimal supply of sandbags and plastic sheeting to prevent or reduce flood damage.

### **Transportation**

1. Keep additional first aid kits in the facility's vehicle(s).
2. Obtain and update regularly emergency phone numbers and identification information for the children, including consent for medical treatment and

transportable in an emergency.

3. Keep at least  $\frac{1}{4}$  tank of gas in all facility vehicles.
4. Develop a plan to supplement facility transportation by the use of volunteers, additional staff, or neighboring facility vehicles.
5. Make sure that the vehicle is in good operating condition.

### **Disaster Drills and Procedures**

1. Schedule regular drills at least once every six months, including provisions for fire, earthquake, shelter in place, relocation and evacuation. Document all such drills. (Section 102417 (g) (9) for Family Child Care Homes and Section 101174 (d) for Child Care Centers.
2. Be sure your staff and children know the signs and signals for various types of disasters, and that they understand what to do.
3. Conduct drills for different types of disasters at several times during the year.
4. Develop plans for relocating to more than one other site, if necessary. Obtain written agreements to use those site, and be sure that parents and staff know the location of the sites.
5. Establish procedures to inform responsible relatives of children in your care about your response plan. Parents can be a valuable resource in helping to plan and secure supplies.
6. In larger child care facilities, establish more than one way to convey an immediate message to all staff in all areas that they need to shelter-in-place (lock down), or evacuate immediately if it is safe. Remember, communication systems that rely on your electrical system may not function in an emergency.
7. Establish confirmed out-of-state and out-of-area telephone contacts that can be used to relay facility status information in case local phone lines are overloaded, and be sure parents and guardians have been given these phone numbers.
8. For larger child care facilities, consider including your governing board, neighborhood residents, local government, businesses, and volunteers in your planning.
9. Provide assistance and information to ensure that staff are prepared at home, and that they have a family plan and supplies.

### **Recovering from Disaster**

Recovery from disaster means efforts to return the facility, staff, and children to normal  
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as soon as possible. There may be extensive visible damage to the physical plant, requiring a series of repairs. Depending on the amount of damage, returning to normal operations could be a long term process. Be familiar with your local jurisdiction's damage assessment process. If your facility sustains structural damage, access may be limited or prohibited and this will impact the clean-up and initial repairs that you and your staff can do. Be sure that your facility has been inspected and you have been given approval to return. The cumulative crisis-related stress of a disaster can dramatically impact the psychological and physical well-being of children and adults. Facilities that are prepared for disaster have shorter recovery times. Loss of clientele and potential loss in income are added reasons why facilities will want to do everything they can to return to normal as soon as possible. Despite your best efforts to provide support and reassurance to children and adults, they may continue to experience these symptoms and reactions which may indicate a need for professional consultation and intervention:

Children: Withdrawn, depressed, helpless, generalized fear, loss of verbal skills, sleep disturbances, loss of toileting skills, anxious attachment and clinging, uncharacteristic hostility or acting out.

Adults: Withdrawal or depression, feelings of inadequacy and helplessness, difficulty in concentration, anti-social behavior, slow to respond, substance abuse, psychosomatic or real physical symptoms (headache, bladder/bowel problems, chest pains, cramps, sleep disturbance, change in food consumption patterns).

Facility staff can assist in psychological recovery by giving children and adults correct information about the disaster, preparing for additional events (such as earthquake aftershock), providing opportunities to talk and share feelings with others at the facility, providing a regimen of choices and activities, and facilitating communication with loved-ones or family members outside of the facility.

The following activities will assist in returning the facility itself to normal operations:

1. As soon as possible after the disaster, you or staff should perform an initial damage inspection of the facility in all interior and exterior areas.
2. A licensed structural engineer, architect or building inspector can assist in a detailed safety inspection of your buildings.
3. Delays in repair and construction may result in lost business from your parents.
4. Determine the potential impact of an interrupted cash flow and consider establishing a contingency fund.
5. Consider obtaining earthquake and flood insurance to protect your facility and assets.
6. Maintain accurate records to inventory condition of furniture, equipment and other high-cost items.
7. Set-up an ongoing system of accurately documenting the costs associated with the

disaster, including staff and supplies.

8. Develop reasonable expectations for staff and children during a disaster, when coping ability is low and frustrations are high.
9. If a major disaster is declared, you may need to contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and local emergency offices to find out about applying for disaster assistance programs.
10. Determine which children or staff will require additional assistance from staff to relocate from the facility during a drill or actual emergency.
11. Contact your local fire department, city or county Office of Emergency Services, or a local Chapter of the American Red Cross regarding training for your facility.

### **Communicating with the Licensing Agency**

Title 22 regulations for most facility types require reporting of unusual incidents to Community Care Licensing by telephone or fax within 24 hours, with a written report to follow in seven days. Communicating with the licensing agency is extremely important if you have damage to your building, need to relocate, or have injuries or deaths involving children or adults. During previous disasters, licensing staff have assisted in facility relocation by expediting the issuance of Provisional Licenses for temporary sites, and coordinating health and safety inspections with local building and fire authorities to assure the safety of any new facility.

Since licenses are not transferable, outside funding sources, such as subsidized child care, child care food programs, and regional centers, may require verification of a current, valid license and status before funding can continue to provide care to children at a new location.

### **Resources**

There are many resources and agencies available to assist in your disaster planning efforts. The following are some of the resources and agencies you may want to contact for further information on disaster planning:

1. Provider groups/associations to share information on disaster planning and disaster resources in your Community.
2. Local Chapters of the American Red Cross.

3. Local City or County Emergency Services Coordinators.
4. Telephone book yellow page listings under "Earthquake Products and Services".
5. For child care facilities, disaster planning and response books and videos through the California Department of Education publications catalog. Phone: 1-800-995-4099.
6. Disaster assistance agency internet web site addresses (check your local phone book for phone numbers):

State of California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES):  
<http://www.oes.ca.gov>

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): <http://www.fema.gov>

Federal Small Business Administration (SBA): <http://www.sba.gov>

American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org>

Los Angeles County Emergency Operations Bureau (downloadable school plans): <http://eob.org>