



PREPAREDNESS FOR CHILDREN



It's important that children know what to do in an emergency, so **include them in family preparedness discussions and decisions**. Kids can be involved in disaster readiness steps with age-appropriate activities. Use this guide to get your family started, then explore the **resources on the back page** for additional information.

FIRST, PREPARE YOURSELF WITH KNOWLEDGE to share and give children guidance. **This will help reduce their fears**. Disaster planning may feel overwhelming, but taking some steps now to learn and review information can help protect your family, assure that your children feel safe and make it easier to recover after a disaster. Refer to these OCP&R Guides:

- OCP&R Guide #03 – Personal & Family Preparedness Before a Disaster**
- OCP&R Guide #04 – Personal & Family Response During & After a Disaster**
- OCP&R Guide #05 – Evacuation Planning**



THEN, TALK TO YOUR CHILDREN It is important to tell children, without overly alarming them, about disasters ahead of time. **Talk about things that could happen during a disaster**, such as the lights or phone not working. Let them know about the people (firefighters, emergency responders, trusted neighbors, etc.) who can potentially help them during a disaster.

MAKE A PLAN AND DISCUSS IT



Your family may not be together if a disaster strikes, so **know how you will contact one another and reconnect if separated**. Think about any specific needs in your family. Your family's needs change over time, so update your plan regularly. Discuss:

WHO will we contact? Pick the same person for each family member to contact – **someone out of town** who may be easier to reach in a disaster.

WHERE will we meet? Decide on safe, familiar, accessible places where your family can go for protection or to reunite. If you have pets or service animals, think about animal-friendly locations. Consider places outside your house, around your neighborhood and outside of your city or town so that you're **prepared for any situation**.



And Practice! Write down your contacts and plans. Make sure that everyone in the family has copies and keeps them in a safe space, like in a backpack, wallet, or taped in a notebook. Put them in your cell phone and in the cloud. Hold a regular family meeting to **review and practice** your plan.

BUILD A KIT Being prepared for an emergency isn't just about staying safe during a disaster. It's also about how to stay **comfortable, fed and healthy** afterwards. For a detailed checklist refer to **OCP&R Guide #07 – Evacuation & Go-Bags**

Having children create their own special disaster backpack supplies kit can help them feel part of the family emergency plan and teaches them personal responsibility.

- ID card and/or wristband**
- favorite stuffed toy
- crayons/pens
- notebook
- soap and soap box
- brush/comb
- toothbrush/toothpaste
- hand towel/bandanna
- flashlight and batteries
- whistle
- ask children what **special things** they want to have (e.g. favorite books, toys, pictures, extra clothes, etc.)



CHILDREN & THEIR RESPONSE TO DISASTERS: HELPING THEM COPE

Children respond differently to disasters than do adults. Sometimes it is difficult to tell if or how severely the child has been affected. Disasters can leave children and teens feeling frightened, confused and insecure. It's important to recognize these reactions and help children cope with their emotions.



ENCOURAGE DIALOGUE and answer questions. Listen to your kids. Ask them about their feelings and validate their concerns. When they ask questions, give just the amount of information you feel your child needs.



LIMIT MEDIA EXPOSURE as intense media coverage of disasters can frighten young children and disturb teenagers as well. If your children watch TV or use the Internet, try to be available to talk with them and answer questions.



MAKE TIME FOR THEM and find support. Help kids understand that they are safe and secure by talking, playing and doing other activities with them. Build support networks with friends, family and community organizations to help you and your children cope.



KEEP TO A ROUTINE to help your children feel as if they still have a sense of structure, which can make them feel more relaxed. When schools and childcare open again, help children return to normal activities like going to class, sports and play groups.



Children and youth are empowered through understanding risks and knowing how to protect themselves. Search on-line resources for kid preparedness games, apps, stories, workbooks and other activities that teach younger children through play. **Empowered youth can help involve their families, peers and communities in disaster preparedness.**

MUCH MORE ONLINE Check out these helpful resources for additional information:

- **Ready Kids!** www.ready.gov/kids - a resource from FEMA
- **American Academy of Pediatrics Family Readiness Kit** www.aap.org/en-us/Documents/disasters_family_readiness_kit.pdf
- **The American Red Cross Disaster Safety for Children** www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/teaching-kids-about-emergency-preparedness.html
- **Sesame Street Let's Get Ready!** www.sesamestreet.org/toolkits/ready - "Planning Together for Emergencies," a **bilingual** (English and Spanish) **multiple media resource** designed to help entire families, especially those with young children, plan and prepare together
- **Ready Wrigley** www.cdc.gov/cpr/readywrigley - CDC's Center for Preparedness and Response campaign features **bilingual** (English and Spanish) books and checklists to provide parents, guardians, teachers and young children with tips, activities and a story to help the whole family prepare
- **Get Ready Get Safe** www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/disaster-relief-in-america/family-emergency-preparedness-plan - Save the Children initiative designed to generate child-focused emergency plans, provide emergency training and ensure emergency resources are in place before a crisis strikes
- **Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response** www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr/children-and-families#preparedness - extensive listing of early childhood disaster-related resources for children and families

