

When Disaster Strikes: An Emergency Preparedness Checklist for Providers of Services and Supports for People with Disabilities

The following Checklist was developed by United Cerebral Palsy to help community providers of services for individuals with disabilities to fully engage their organization, including staff, volunteers and the individuals they serve, in community, organizational and personal preparedness for emergencies and disasters.

Community Emergency Planning

1. Community Planning -- Participate in community emergency planning efforts. Ensure that both staff and people with disabilities are fully participating in the community planning process and effectively communicating the perspective of people with disabilities.

Macro Preparedness – Procedures to help ensure your organization is ready and survives an emergency or disaster

2. Your Services -- Identify the primary services you think you will continue to provide following an emergency.

3. Basic Resources -- Identify the critical material resources necessary to maintain these operations.



4. Staff Personal/Family Preparedness -- Encourage staff to have a personal, family or home emergency plan to increase the likelihood that staff and their families can cope with the disaster without outside help.

5. Essential personnel -- Determine which staff should automatically report to work in a disaster, and have backups.

6. Staff contact list -- Develop and post in a private but accessible place a list of staff home and contact telephone numbers for emergency use only. Ask each staff also to list contact information for someone out of the area who could serve the “clearinghouse” function for getting in touch.

7. Volunteers -- Develop your own volunteers especially to cover in a disaster, and have backups.

8. Locating Everyone – Implement procedures to ensure that you will know where everyone is at all times, utilizing such strategies as a contact registry, a master schedule, a “buddy system,” wireless telecom devices, etc. -- as well as recruiting emergency contacts who live at least 100 miles away to act as a clearinghouse for information on your staff and individuals served.



9. Important Documents -- Implement procedures to ensure important documents pertaining to all the individuals you serve are available, utilizing such strategies as putting individuals’ permanent legal documents, or copies (birth certificates, immigration documents, guardianship decrees, etc.) in a safe, accessible, off-site, 24-hour location and other documents (SS cards, Government IDs, Medicaid IDs, Food Stamp IDs, prescriptions, DME info, etc.) in sealed freezer bags in emergency kits, with copies sent to out-of-area emergency contacts. As a backup, consider putting everything possible on a secure internet web site.

10. Emergency Kits – Assign and train staff to ensure that home emergency kit(s) are put together, are in designated place(s) and checked and updated regularly.

11. Posting Special Needs -- Post a list of individuals you serve and their special needs in an accessible, but private, location.

12. Medications/Equipment -- Assign and train staff to keep important medical and/or mobility equipment and assistive devices in consistent, convenient and secured places and in working condition.

13. Immediate Shelter -- Identify temporary shelters (consider churches, nearby community centers, schools, other residential services, etc.). Develop mutual aid agreements

14. Make assignments, train and cross-train staff for:

- **Site Security** -- Check and turn off gas, electricity and water if evacuating.
- **Fire Suppression** -- Check for and suppress small fires and attempt to notify fire department.
- **Search and Rescue** -- Ensure everyone has evacuated. Quickly search the facility for people who may be trapped or injured. Help if possible. Note and record situation for other responders, including names and location.
- **First Aid** -- Administer first aid to injured persons

15. Assisting Individuals -- Assign staff to specific individuals who are likely to need assistance in the event of an evacuation. Be sure they have a designated place(s) to go.

16. Accounting for People – Assign staff to take a “head count” to ensure all staff and individuals served have evacuated, if necessary, or are sheltered at home, if possible.



17. Transportation -- Have an emergency transportation plan, including designating accessible emergency vehicles for people, and others that can carry equipment and supplies, as well as specific destinations (near, far, farther).

18. Organizational “Buddy System” -- Identify neighboring agencies or businesses you can join with to share resources in an emergency in order to maintain a level of operations for both and ensure the ongoing support of people you serve.

19. Insurance – Make sure you have the best disaster coverage you can obtain and afford, including indemnity for payroll and for loss of business or funding, if available.

20. Government Funding -- Make an emergency agreement with government funders for interim continuation of funding during an emergency.

Micro Preparedness – Procedures to help insure the individuals you serve are prepared

21. Health Information -- Have multiple copies of a “Health Information Card,” with one that stays with each individual, including information on medications,

equipment, allergies, sensitivities, communication style, preferred treatment, medical and care providers and important contact people.

22. Medication -- Have an emergency medication protocol that will ensure a 7-14 day supply of essential medications, maintaining extra supplies, current prescriptions and/or emergency agreements with medical providers.

23. Equipment -- Have an emergency DME protocol, including attaching simple handling instructions to all equipment, with copies in emergency kit(s).

24. Service Animals -- Have an emergency service animal protocol, ensuring service animals have animal emergency kits and current identification tags, with both the owner's home number and the out-of-area contact number.

25. "Carry-Along" Supplies -- Assign staff to maintain a small kit (fanny pack, backpack or bag) of "Carry-Along Supplies" that each individual you serve keeps with them at all times, containing:

- His/her health information card
- Instructions on personal assistance needs and how best to provide them
- An emergency communication card (For individuals with cognitive disabilities, it might say something like: "I cannot read. I communicate slowly. Please speak slowly to me. I can point to or understand simple pictures and some words.")
- Reduced copies of important documents such as Social Security card, Medicaid card, government ID, etc.
- Copies of prescriptions
- Flashlight on a key ring
- Emergency signaling device such as a whistle, beeper, bell, screecher, flashing light, etc.
- Small battery-operated radio and extra batteries

26. Practice, practice, practice -- Conduct periodic drills/practices, without fail. Staff and individuals served *will* turn over.

27. Backups, backups, backups -- Have all the backups you can, including relief staff, emergency on-call staff, joint staffing agreements with other providers, your own volunteers, pre-agreements with volunteer service organizations, etc.

