

Oklahoma Statewide CCDF Child Care Disaster and Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and procedures for the Department of Human Services Child Care Services (CCS) to respond to a disaster that significantly affects a community's child care infrastructure. The plan outlines the roles and responsibilities of CCS and partner organizations in providing support to child care providers and families affected by a disaster. A Child Care Preparedness and Response Guide is available for all Child Care Licensing Staff and Oklahoma's professional development partners. It may be used as a reference when providing technical assistance with child care providers in preparation for their emergency preparedness and response plan.

This plan was created using the following assumptions:

- 1) Child care is an integral and essential part of a community's economic viability and should be restored as soon as possible following an emergency event.
- 2) Child care providers have their site-specific emergency and disaster plans as required by Child Care Licensing Requirements which outlines the mandates to practice drills, review and adjust as needed based on children, families, staff, and facility needs and to keep families informed of current and any revised procedures.
- 3) As new families or staff are added to an individual program, they should be informed of all aspects of the process to maintain safety during emergencies. Any changes to an individual emergency plan should be communicated to all involved- including volunteers or others who are regularly or situationally involved with a program, whether a family child care home or a child care center.
- 4) Subsidy records and child care data is kept virtually so it can be accessed in offices in areas of the state that are not affected by an emergency/disaster. Continuation of care is available along with any processing of new subsidy approvals based on needs of an individual community or several counties or areas of the state.
- 5) Licensing staff and other partners have training and technical assistance available for child care providers. Resources are available to share with providers during trainings or technical assistance.
- 6) Child Care providers should have enough food, water and supplies to take care of children for up to three days without intervention in an extreme situation.
- 7) This document is consistent with other local, state and federal disaster planning documents related to caring for the needs of young children.
- 8) Families may need temporary assistance with respite care for their children while they work in the recovery phase following an emergency/disaster. Child care providers will be notified of the process to include families affected by an emergency or disaster so they can pass the information to include their families. This might include relocation to a specific suitable location for care to resume.
- 9) Emergency responders may need care for their own children in order to meet the needs of the community. Their needs may be temporary or long term and Lead Agency will work with providers to meet those needs. Emergency responders will be informed of

the process to access temporary child care in the days following the emergency/disaster. The information will come from Child Care Subsidy and be distributed to agencies involved with response and recovery, including child care resource and referral. Child Care Resource and Referral may be contacted at (405) 942-5001 or <http://www.oklahomachildcare.org>.

- 10) Emergency responses will vary depending on the needs of a community, the particular emergency or disaster, the geographic area involved, extent of the damage and auxiliary services available.
- 11) Child care providers update their emergency plan as needed and communicate their plan to all families, staff and to their licensing specialist; especially important for any new family and new staff or at any time there have been changes to the plan.
- 12) Supplies are prepared for the unexpected emergency, special attention should be followed relating to any food allergies and/or medication needs of children or adults.
- 13) Some emergencies happen without warning so important paperwork and supplies are kept in a convenient location and be ready to “grab and go” at a moment’s notice. All contact information is accessible and up-to-date for families of children and staff.
- 14) Child Care Providers are required to know when and how to conduct lock down procedures with their staff, families, and children. Best practice for lock down procedure is that either the individual locations within a child care program, or the entire child care program understand the need to shelter children from accessibility from outside the building such as a police action in the neighborhood, or from inside the building such as entry by an intruder.

The key emergency response functions relating to child care are:

- Support the safety and well-being of children in child care through continued licensing efforts.
- Ensure the continuation of Child Care Services division services. A Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) reviewed annually outlines the administrative plan if CCS staff or facilities are involved in an emergency/disaster in any part of the state.
- Child Care Services will contact individual providers in response to an emergency/disaster. The process depends on the location and size of geographic limitations or damage within the state. Discussions will take place through regular monitoring visits in keeping the program, staff, families, and children aware of what would take place in planned drills and in response to an emergency/disaster. Whether the event is isolated to individual provider, a regional impact has occurred, or statewide assistance is needed.
- Provide technical assistance as requested by providers, licensing personnel and make recommendations for temporary or emergency child care. Two way communications will continue to occur before or after an emergency/disaster. Child Care providers may be informed of any changes due to an emergency by phone, email, and/or in person, depending on what technology may or may not have been affected. Electronic records are kept virtually and will be available continually as needed. Child Care Locator keeps information available on every

licensed program in Oklahoma. Child Care Resource and Referral maintain a virtual database of licensed child care programs, part-day programs, and some drop-in and/or nanny services.

- Continue child care subsidy payments to providers. The payment of subsidies will continue to be made without interruption. Payments are made electronically. Any changes to program availability will be communicated to subsidy and changes will be made if children need to transfer from one location to another. Additional newly approved subsidy notifications will be given to site specific locations.
- Child Care Licensing staff will contact individual programs in their assigned region and assist in making determinations of whether children can be cared for in any facility who may have experienced damage or loss of services. Included will be access to and from a program by safe roads and utility services.
- Continue eligibility determinations and subsidy authorizations for parents and address any new needs for subsidy due to the impact of the emergency, such as a loss of employment.
- Disseminate information to providers and families regarding disaster assistance and response including recovery, reunification and rebuilding with the Oklahoma Emergency Operation Center and other agencies that offer support following an emergency.
- Child Care Resource and Referral will be included in meeting family and provider needs for assistance. The CCR&R will continue to work hand-in-hand with child care licensing and other partner agencies to provide needed support.
- Child Care Warmline will also assist with meeting provider needs before, during, and following an emergency event to maintain the needs of children, families, and child care providers. They will provide resources as needed.
- Child Care Warmline resources and staff are available to the statewide network of child care resource and referral, to providers and to families to offer assistance by phone, email, or in person related to health, safety, and mental health needs of the workforce and all children and families. Warmline has a collaboration in place with each region through quarterly partner meetings throughout the state. This keeps the licensing staff and partners from each of the eight regional locations in contact with Warmline and also through the Department of Mental Health to share resources. The Warmline is part of the Oklahoma State Department of Health and their website and contact information is <https://okwarmline.org>; 1-888-KIDS (5437) The system of city and county health departments share information with Warmline.

I. Planning For Continuation of Services to Child Care Families

Oklahoma Department of Human Services has in place a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) which incorporates Child Care Services. This plan designates responsibility for essential staffing needs relative to the agency's primary mission to improve the quality of life of vulnerable

Oklahomans by increasing people's ability to lead safer, healthier, more independent and productive lives. The Office of Emergency Management Services coordinates state wide responses and provides updates during and immediately following an event.

A) Continuity of Service

The priority is to protect the health and safety of children in care while minimizing the impact to providers and families. Any time a situation exists in the state where child care might be affected due to structural damage of a facility, loss of utilities or any other condition that would limit the ability to care for children in healthy, safe environments, licensing specialists across the state monitor the impact and report findings to CCS. Individual responses are made dependent on the situation. Lead Agency will assist child care providers with meeting the needs of all children in care, especially infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children or staff with chronic medical conditions. Assistance may be sought working with collaborating agencies such as the Oklahoma State Department of Health and Oklahoma State Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse.

Lead Agency will work together with all partners to make sure that the focus will include changing eligibility needs of families and providers, plans for how the eligibility needs will be maintained in a time when electronic resources and/or in person offices may not be available, new requests for services may come due to the change in employment, income, family structures, etc. following a disaster or emergency. The application process and record retention is currently streamlined to make applications accessible for all families. Any changes to the current process will be decided by the Lead Agency and all partners will work together, up to and including, door-to-door walking of geographic locations that have experienced significant damage or additional needs when utility, housing, transportation, and communication challenges may occur.

B) Coordination with Other State/Territory Agencies and Key Partners

Child Care Services and Department of Human Services staff collaborates with members of Children in Emergencies Committee. The committee meets quarterly and is convened by the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management. Representatives on the committee are from local, state, regional agencies. The Oklahoma State Department of Health Resource Guide for Access and Functional Needs of Children and Youth in Disaster Planning is used to monitor emergency response to meet the needs of vulnerable populations, such as children. A representative of the Lead Agency is on the board of the Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness (OPSR) and shares information with that legislative mandated organization. The plan is also shared with the Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Agency who will be merging with OPSR in the future so collaboration will be shared extensively in this process.

Child Care Providers statewide are urged to contact their Emergency Response Providers in their local area to notify them of their location and that they are caring for young children.

Emergency Response Providers may also be able to give best practice advice on the location to provide lock-down, evacuation, and relocation options.

II. Emergency Preparedness Regulatory Requirements for Child Care Providers

Licensing Requirements for Child Care Programs and Family Child Care Homes detail situations that emergency plans should include procedures for (A) serious injuries; (B) serious illnesses; (C) poison exposure; (D) outbreaks of communicable diseases, including pandemic influenza; (E) weather conditions, including tornados, floods, blizzards, and ice storms; (F) fires, including wildfires; (G) human-made disasters, including chemical and industrial accidents; (G) human-made threats, including individuals with threatening behaviors, bomb threats, and terrorist attacks; (I) lost or abducted children; (J) utility disruption; and (K) other natural or human-made disasters that could create structural damage to the facility or pose health hazards.

Specific details are found in Licensing Requirements. Emergency plans must be written and individualized to the program and hours of operation; reviewed annually with staff and families; and drills are conducted at various times throughout the hours of operation, so that each child and staff member, including volunteers, participates at least one time every three months. Drills and actual events should keep safety as the number one concern for all involved. If food will be included in any drill or actual event, keep in mind any allergies of children and staff, and remember to include appropriate foods for the ages of children in care.

Drills: fire drills are conducted at least monthly by evacuating and meeting at pre-determined locations; tornado drills are conducted at least monthly by sheltering in pre-determined on-site locations; lock down and relocation procedures reviews: at least once every 12 months; and the director updates, as necessary, and reviews emergency plans and procedures: at least once every 12 months; upon enrollment of children with disabilities or chronic medical conditions; after a drill when procedure issues are identified; and after an emergency.

Emergency plans should include:

- Procedures for addressing each child's needs, with additional considerations for: (A) 2-year-olds and younger; and (B) children and staff with disabilities or chronic medical conditions.
- Each family, staff member, and volunteer is informed of procedures for every type of emergency response.
- Ways to account for the location of each staff and child during an emergency include:
 - Sheltering in place (an appropriate response at times when safety is sought within an occupied building, such as a tornado watch.);
 - Lock down procedures (should be initiated when there is a credible threat to safety of children and staff. A response might include staying in classrooms, lock all outside and inside doors, and remain out of sight.);-and best practice

- would be conducting lock down procedures whether the threat is from outside the facility, or inside the facility.
- Evacuation procedures (to exit the building to a pre-determined location on the property such as a typical fire drill. This could also consist of leaving the area to travel to a predetermined location and includes a transportation plan. Reasons for this kind of evacuation could include a gas leak, weather-related disaster, or specific, serious damage to a facility).
 - Informing families of the pre-determined transportation plan and evacuation location and alternate location;
 - A method for reuniting parents or other approved adults with the children in each type of emergency involving lock-down, shelter-in-place, or evacuation.
- Procedures for notifying emergency authorities and parents including a method and backup method. Texting may be the best form of communication in times of emergencies. Procedures should ensure all personnel including volunteers receive training and are familiar with emergency plans and procedures for different types of emergency responses. Training includes personnel roles and responsibilities in an emergency; location of posted emergency routes and alternate routes; location of first aid and emergency supply kits; and location and use of fire extinguishers.
 - First responders may be available to share specific emergency procedures for a specific facility, if inquiry is done prior to an emergency situation.
 - Accessible, operable phones must be available in emergency sites including off-site if an evacuation is conducted. There should also be a phone in each vehicle when children are transported.
 - Posted emergency information must include program information and emergency numbers; first aid kit, emergency supply kit, and fire extinguisher locations; and evacuation routes.
 - Emergency first aid and supply kits are required to have mandated supplies listed in Licensing Requirements; records of all children and personnel currently in attendance with up-to-date emergency contact information; and children and staff's prescribed medications.
 - Emergency equipment should include smoke and carbon monoxide alarms that are operable and tested at least monthly; central detection and alarm system for smoke and carbon monoxide, inspected and tagged at least every 12 months by a state licensed authority; fire extinguishers and automatic sprinkler systems that are fully functional; and inspected and tagged at least every 12 months by a state licensed authority.

III. Post Disaster Support

Child Care Licensing Specialists in the affected areas assess the needs of child care providers to continue child care that meets health and safety requirements. Programs that are closed due to structural or utility disruption are noted and families are provided alternate program referral information by Child Care Resource and Referral. Licensing staff will contact the CCS state office to report on the numbers of programs impacted, to what degree, and specific needs of the community are taken into consideration.

If there is a need for additional child care in disaster declared areas, Child Care Services staff will work with the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management, Red Cross, FEMA, Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral, etc. to determine where care can be made available at other locations. Child Care Providers may be asked if they can care for additional children who have been impacted by the emergency.

Reunification of families with their children should be included in programs' emergency plans. Reunification is defined as 'the process of assisting displaced disaster survivors, including children, in voluntarily reestablishing contact with family and friends after a period of separation'. Swift and safe reunification should include procedures to identify and verify who has permission to assume responsibility for a child. Collaboration with Emergency Management, community officials, and other disaster relief organizations is part of a reunification plan.

Post-disaster supports may be available for families and providers. In each disaster response, CCS will assist emergency management and other responders with getting information disseminated related to child care and keeping children safe. Oklahoma has used resources available through county and state health and mental health departments to assist with physical and emotional health supports. Child Care Warmline staff, located within the Oklahoma State Department of Health, will assist meeting needs by providing resources throughout the entire state. The Warmline has a toll-free number that is answered five days a week during regular business hours, and staff are continually responding to incoming calls, and in making out-going calls to determine what needs are in the child care programs and how their resources can be accessed. A person to person call is often the most important immediate response child care providers need for additional personal support and discussion of what needs can be met through medical, physical, social, and emotional information.

Child Care Licensing Specialists have access to materials and resources that can be used to assist providers with emergency preparedness and response. Child Care Subsidy needs will be met through the Child Care Adult and Family Services who supervise the child care subsidy workforce. This workforce is able to discuss all needs the family may have following a disaster/emergency event or long-term such as assistance with food, housing, medical and special needs that could arise, or be maintained at an appropriate level. Child Care Services is part of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, the same agency that houses Child Care Subsidy.

IV. Restoring or Rebuilding Child Care Facilities and Infrastructure after a Disaster

Oklahoma Child Care Services has a system in place to identify the needs of communities following a disaster or emergency and to ensure that the safety and needs of young children and their families are met. Collaborative meetings are held by phone or in person with national, state and local emergency management teams to include child care in the immediate and post-emergency restoration of services.

Multiple Oklahoma organizations and agencies related to children and emergencies meet regularly to discuss coordination of efforts. A few links to provide additional assistance are:

Disaster Distress Helpline <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline>

FEMA resources are available at the following links:

- Public Assistance guide, 2016: <https://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/111781>

Post-Disaster Child Care Needs and Resources:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/archive/ohsepr/response-recovery/post-disaster-child-care-needs-and-resources>

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network <http://nctsn.org>