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Before a Disaster: At a Glance

Create a Plan

☐ Assess the types of disasters the agency might face.
☐ Develop a child welfare disaster plan (coordinate with department level and statewide disaster plans, assign person responsible, consult with stakeholders, state expectations for providers, write the plan – how to manage, build critical infrastructure, prioritize).
☐ Conduct or participate in drills on all levels.
☐ Update the plan regularly.

Prepare to Manage

☐ Designate managers in charge and backups.
☐ Identify essential functions; designate staff and backups to oversee these functions, provide training; plan for communication.
☐ Assign other critical roles (media, volunteers, liaisons to other States, federal partners, and courts).
☐ Stress leadership.
☐ Consider post-disaster workload demands and resources.
☐ Identify locations for operations (prepare buildings, consider generators, determine possible alternative locations).
☐ Prepare disaster supply kits.
☐ Consider flow of funds.

Enhance Critical Infrastructure

Coordinate with Key Partners

☐ Work with emergency management agencies.
☐ Establish liaisons with other States to coordinate services and share information.
☐ Build collaborations with other relevant State agencies and programs.
☐ Collaborate with service providers.
☐ Coordinate with courts.
☐ Establish liaisons with federal partners.
☐ Identify potential volunteers and their tasks.
Develop Communication Systems
- Establish toll free numbers.
- Establish and use internal communication systems.
- Designate websites for disaster information.
- Prepare for media communication.
- Arrange for and use communication technology (e.g., alternatives to land line telephones; computers and mobile computing; explore GPS locators).

Strengthen Information Systems
- Build on existing plans.
- Store critical information in statewide automated systems.
- Provide access to automated systems.
- Protect vital records (e.g., off-site backup, protect computers).
- Protect equipment.
- Assess paper records.

Prepare Staff and Contractors
- Encourage staff to develop personal disaster plans and keep them updated; store information from the plans so they are accessible during a disaster.
- Require staff to check in after disasters and provide information on how to do so.
- Keep emergency supplies in offices.
- Train all agency staff on agency disaster plan; participate in drills.
- Establish support services for staff.
- Develop expectations and support for contracted staff.

Prepare Families, Providers and Youth*
- Require foster and adoptive families and providers to develop disaster plans and keep them updated; store information from the plans so they are accessible during a disaster.
- Require families, providers and youth to check in after disasters.
- Provide families, providers and youth with information on emergency preparedness.
- Prepare birth families and families receiving in home services.
- Collect critical identifying information for birth parents when possible; store contact information so it is accessible during a disaster.

* This includes foster parents, relative caregivers, adoptive families, group homes, residential treatment centers, other facilities serving children in the care of child welfare agencies (psychiatric hospitals).
During a Disaster: At a Glance

Manage
- Designated disaster managers take charge; those in charge of essential functions take on their roles; communicate with staff and providers.
- Those assigned to “other critical roles” take on their tasks.

Workload Management
- Assess the availability of child welfare staff.
- Deploy staff to meet the demands of the disaster and draw on extra resources.
- Carry out work functions identified as essential; waive others.
- Find out what special waivers might go into effect during a crisis and communicate those to all parties needing the information.
- Train staff to answer the toll free phone numbers.
- Rotate local and non-local staff.
- Have managers log situations they address.

Assess and Respond to Client Needs
- Establish contact with/locate families, providers and youth; maintain database to track.
- Conduct an initial assessment of locations and needs of families, providers and youth.
- Provide information, support and services to families, providers and youth; coordinate with other agencies.
- Provide additional programs/services for children, youth and families affected by the disaster.
- Identify and serve children separated from parents
- Relocate services to alternate locations as required.
- Locate services close to where families and children are.
- Make services culturally competent.
- Inform clients of other available disaster-related services and programs.
Support Staff
☐ Offer staff support and opportunities to process emotions.
☐ Allow staff scheduling flexibility.
☐ Advocate for staff to have priority in emergency housing.
☐ Establish a separate administrative center for staff to meet and take breaks.
☐ Address immediate staff needs (child care, need for goods, funds).

Manage Volunteers
☐ Assign a person or position the responsibility of screening, assigning and communicating with volunteers.
☐ Develop brief manuals or one-page “tip sheets” of instructions for tasks.

Coordinate
☐ Draw on established relationships with key partners to communicate as necessary about the crisis. Include:
  ☐ statewide emergency management staff,
  ☐ liaisons in other jurisdictions,
  ☐ contractors,
  ☐ service providers,
  ☐ courts,
  ☐ federal partners, and
  ☐ potential volunteers.

Communicate
☐ Use internal communication system to broadcast messages.
☐ Ensure that toll free numbers are working.
☐ Post critical information on websites; keep updated.
☐ Implement the media plan.
☐ Review communication technology.

Assess Information Systems
☐ Review access to computers for staff.
☐ Check off-site locations with backups of critical information systems.
After a Disaster: At a Glance

Manage

☐ Assess need for new or modified services as a result of the disaster.
☐ Continue to provide additional services and supports to affected families.
☐ Provide services to children, youth and families from other States who arrive in your State.
☐ Coordinate services for children who are out of the area or out of State.
☐ Continue to provide services to unaccompanied children.
☐ Ensure service delivery is culturally sensitive and competent.
☐ For staff answering the toll-free numbers, develop a frequently asked questions document.
☐ Maintain contact with federal partners.
☐ Communicate with staff and contractors frequently so they know what is going on.
☐ Continue support services for staff and contractors to help them deal with the trauma and stress of child welfare work and disaster work.
☐ Recognize staff efforts.
☐ Invest in rebuilding; collaborate with partners and with broader emergency response efforts.

Capture Lessons Learned

☐ Hold debriefing sessions.
☐ Update the plan based on these debriefing sessions.
☐ Communicate revisions to the plan.

Rebuilding Better Systems

☐ Assign a person to collect information on rebuilding resources.
☐ Identify systems that need to be strengthened.
☐ Build new systems that will improve disaster response and also strengthen critical infrastructure to improve performance and outcomes.