



# Disaster Preparedness for Families of Children with Special Needs



**D**isaster Preparedness: Hurricanes, acts of terrorism, and floods are all clear in the minds of everyone today. But, even though we all know what CAN happen. . . are we prepared? Can we protect ourselves and our family? Would we know what to do?

For families of children with special needs it can become even more difficult. Planning how you will respond is critical. It means extra attention to details and needs that typical families may not have to worry about. We need to take care of equipment, medication, go to special shelters, and notify doctors just to name a few.

FIFI is dedicated to helping families of children and youth with special health care needs be prepared in the event of an emergency, disaster, or acts of terrorism. Using this preparation and planning guide can help you be better prepared, no matter what the emergency or disaster!

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# ARE YOU READY?



Where will your family be when disaster strikes? They could be anywhere—at work, at school or in the car. How will you find each other? Will you know if your children are safe? What if your child has special needs? Disaster can strike quickly and without warning. It can force you to evacuate your neighborhood or confine you to your home. What would you do if basic services—water, gas, electricity or telephones—were cut off? Local officials and relief workers will be on the scene after a disaster, but they cannot reach everyone right away. If you have a child with special needs, planning becomes critical.

Families can cope with disaster by preparing in advance and working together as a team. Being prepared is your best protection and your responsibility. This booklet is organized to assist you and your family in being prepared and ready!

## SECTION ONE: Thinking Ahead

A prepared family thinks ahead and knows what to prepare for. This section will assist you in thinking about possible disasters and where to begin.

Types of Disasters

Disaster Resources

## SECTION TWO: Disaster Planning & Preparation

Planning is critical to keep your family safe. Families dealing with special needs require extra planning. This section will focus on planning and preparation.

Disaster Supply Kits

Developing a Disaster Plan for Your Child, Family, and Neighborhood

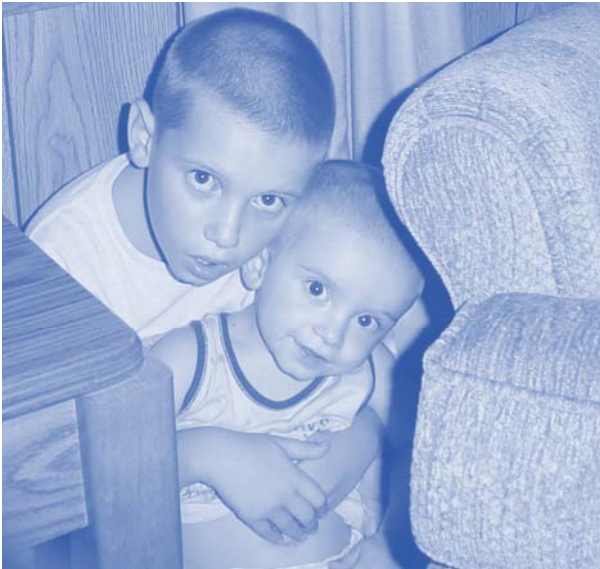
## SECTION THREE: Response & Recovery

Plans will be put to a test when a disaster hits. There are many things for a family to consider when responding to a disaster and beginning the recovery process. This section will offer strategies to enable families to move from the disaster through the response and recovery.

Evacuation

What to Do When a Disaster Strikes

Tips to Help Families Support Their Children



# SECTION ONE:

## Thinking Ahead



### Types of Disasters

Families in Florida can face a variety of natural and man made disasters. Natural disasters include hurricanes, fires, floods, tornados, epidemic diseases, and other weather related problems. Man made disasters are the result of terrorism, intentional or unintentional explosions, or bio terrorism.

Natural disasters are not new to the families of Florida. The state has experienced major hurricanes, tornados, floods, and wild fires multiple times over the last few years. Each natural disaster has killed, injured, displaced, and caused property damage to thousands.

Most families, when discussing disaster preparation, think about hurricanes. But, there are many types of natural disasters that are common to the state. This includes fires during the dry months, floods from heavy rains, coastal damage from Gulf and Atlantic storms, tornados and high winds, and fog that causes extended periods of limited visibility. Families should also be prepared for disease epidemics that could hit the state, causing limited access to health care and forcing strict sanitation and prevention practices or extended stays within the home or a community because of quarantine.

We cannot escape the vision of September 11, 2001 and continued threats of terrorism. Since terrorism can come in many forms, such as bombs, disease, or attack, it is important that your family understand how to put into action a disaster plan in a variety of situations that would include man made disasters and emergencies.

When planning for a disaster, families need to think about potential situations and make sure they can adapt their plan to meet their families needs no matter what the cause.

### Resources for Families

By calling one number, 511, motorists everywhere in the state can find out about construction updates, lane closures, traffic incidents, severe weather reports and Amber Alerts for child abductions.

<http://floridadisaster.org/>

This site provides information and planning tools to the Florida Emergency Management Community. It has helpful information on disasters (all kinds), planning, disaster supply kits, maps of evacuation routes, maps of potential coastal flooding due to storms, and much more.

<http://www.fema.gov/>

The Federal Emergency Management Agency website has information on current and past disasters, applying for assistance, maps, and libraries of information and resources for disaster planning, response, and recovery. They also have a special website (<http://www.fema.gov/kids/>) just for kids.

<http://www.ready.gov/america/index.html>

The Homeland Security office hosts a website to assist Americans in preparing for and responding to disasters of all kinds. The site has kits, tools, forms, and resources available for downloading.

<http://www.redcross.org/>

The Red Cross website is home to a broad base of information relating to planning and response to disasters. The site has resources as well as specific information for communities after a disaster strikes.

# Children with Special Health Care Needs:

## Disaster Preparation Checklist

The time to prepare for a disaster is BEFORE it happens. Use this checklist to assist you in making sure that you have done everything possible to prepare for a disaster and prevent serious outcomes, should one hit your community.

### Your Child with Special Needs

- ✓ Do you have a current care plan and list of medications from your child's physician?
- ✓ Do you have an emergency information form filled out on your child?
- ✓ Do you have a two week supply of medications and supplies for your child?
- ✓ Do you have back up systems or plans for medical equipment that require electricity?
- ✓ Have you discussed with your child's doctor the best place for him/her in the event there is a disaster?
- ✓ Are your local emergency management team and neighbors aware that you have a child with special needs and familiar with those needs?
- ✓ Do you have a disaster plan for your child while he/she is at school, day care or church?

### Your Family

- ✓ Does your family have a disaster plan? Have you practiced your plan?
- ✓ Do you have a disaster supply kit for your family?
- ✓ Have you designated and shared with friends and family a "meeting" place and central point of contact should your family be separated during a disaster?
- ✓ Have you discussed disasters and preparation with your children and shared information on common disasters?
- ✓ Have you shown your small children pictures of emergency workers common to disaster scenes (such as workers in uniform, in fire suits, and workers wearing protective face gear)?
- ✓ Have you made plans for your pets?

### Your Home

- ✓ Have you checked your home for materials and items that might pose a hazard during a disaster? (Don't forget the outside!)
- ✓ Have you located and learned how to turn on and off utilities such as gas and electricity?
- ✓ Do you have a working smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your home?
- ✓ Does your home have necessary resources such as a water hose, fire extinguishers, generators, etc?
- ✓ Have you developed a plan with your neighbors on how you will assist one another in case of a disaster?

## SECTION TWO: Planning & Preparation



### Preparation and Planning Tips

- Meet with your family and discuss why you need to prepare for disaster. Explain the dangers of fire, severe weather, and hurricanes to children. Plan to share responsibilities and work together as a team.
- Discuss the types of disasters that are most likely to happen. As a family discuss how this can effect all family members and how you will address the special needs of persons with a disability. Explain what to do in each case.
- Pick two places to meet in the event you are separated. You might pick outside your home in case of a sudden emergency such as a fire. Or if you can't return home, you would pick someplace outside of your neighborhood. Everyone must know the address of the "meeting place" and how to contact one another.
- Ask an out-of-state friend to be your "family contact." After a disaster, it's often easier to call long distance. Other family members should call this person and tell them where they are. Everyone should memorize your contact's phone number.
- Discuss what to do in an evacuation. Plan how to take care of your pets.
- Post emergency telephone numbers by phones (fire, police, ambulance, hospital, doctor, poison control, etc.).
- Teach children how and when to call 9-1-1 or your local Emergency Medical Services number for emergency help.
- Show each adult family member how and when to turn off the water, gas, and electricity at the main switches.
- Decide the best evacuation routes from your home.

# Disaster Supply Kit

## For Families of Children with Special Health Care Needs

Preparation is the key to surviving a disaster and managing the chaos that occurs afterwards. There are many tips for preparing for a disaster that is applicable to all families. In addition, families with special needs must be prepared to manage their needs under undesirable conditions. One way to prepare is by making a Disaster Supplies Kit. When a disaster hits, you won't have time to shop or search for supplies. But if you've gathered supplies in advance, your family can handle an evacuation or home confinement.

### WATER

Store water in plastic containers such as soft drink bottles. Avoid using containers such as cardboard milk cartons or glass bottles. A person needs to drink at least two quarts of water each day. Hot environments and intense physical activity can double that amount. Children, nursing mothers, and many persons with special needs will need more.

- Store one gallon of water per person per day.
- Keep at least a three-day supply of water per person (two quarts for drinking, two quarts for each person in your household for food preparation/sanitation).\*

### FOOD

Store at least a three-day supply of non-perishable food. Select foods that require no refrigeration, preparation or cooking, and little or no water. If you must heat food, pack a can of sterno. Select food items that are compact and lightweight.

- Ready-to-eat canned meats, fruits, and vegetables with pop tops
- Canned or boxed juices
- Staples (salt, sugar, pepper, spices, etc.)
- High-energy foods such as raisins, peanut butter, or granola bars\*
- Vitamins
- Food for infants\*
- Food that meets diets of individuals with special needs (such as Pedialyte)\*



### If You Must Leave Home

You should always be prepared to evacuate. Items that should be packed in preparation for an evacuation to a shelter are marked with an asterisk\*. Keep all of the items that you will most likely need during an evacuation in an easy-to carry container—such as a backpack or duffle bag. Keep the bag in an easy to reach place near the exit you most often use at your home.

## FIRST AID SUPPLIES

Put together a first aid kit for your home and one for each car. A first aid kit should include:

- Sterile adhesive bandages in assorted sizes
- Assorted sizes of safety pins
- Cleansing agent/soap including waterless alcohol based
- Latex gloves (2 pairs)
- Sunscreen
- 2-inch sterile gauze pads (4–6)
- 4-inch sterile gauze pads (4-6)
- Triangular bandages (3)

Non-prescription medications in age appropriate doses for all family members

- Aspirin or non aspirin pain reliever
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antacid (for stomach upset)
- Syrup of Ipecac to induce vomiting if advised by the Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222
- Laxative
- Activated charcoal if advised by the Poison Control Center
- Anti-itch cream
- 2-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- 3-inch sterile roller bandages (3 rolls)
- Eye dressing pads
- Scissors
- Tweezers
- Needles and thread
- Moistened towelettes
- Antiseptic
- Thermometer
- Tongue blades (2)
- Tube of petroleum jelly or other lubricant

**Can you care for yourselves and your home without outside assistance for a while (sometimes called sheltering in place)? For ten days?**



## SUPPLIES FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

- Two week supply of all disposable supplies such as dressing materials, nasal cannulas, or suction catheters\*
- Two-week supply of all medications, prescription, non-prescription\*
- Generator or battery backup for all electrical medical equipment
- Copies of prescriptions for medical equipment, supplies, and medications\*
- Extra contact lenses and supplies or glasses\*
- Extra batteries for hearing aids, communication devices\*
- Special dietary foods and supplies\*
- Manual wheelchairs and other necessary equipment\*

Ask your physician or pharmacist about storing prescription medications that must be refrigerated. Have a cooler and ice on hand for this purpose.

## FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN (two week supply)

- Formula-ready to eat or with sterile water for mixing\*
- Diapers\*
- Bottles\*
- Powdered milk\*
- Medications\*
- Pacifiers\*
- Favorite blanket or toy\*

## TOOLS AND EMERGENCY SUPPLIES

- Cups, plates, and plastic utensils
- Emergency preparedness manual
- Battery-operated radio with extra batteries
- Flashlight with extra batteries
- Cash or traveler's checks, change
- Non-electric can opener, utility knife
- Fire extinguisher: small canister ABC type
- Tube tent
- Pliers
- Tape
- Compass
- Matches in a waterproof container or lighter
- Aluminum foil
- Plastic storage containers
- Signal flare
- Paper, pencil
- Needles, thread
- Medicine dropper
- Shut-off wrench, to turn off household gas and water
- Whistle
- Plastic sheeting
- Map of the area (with shelter locations)
- Non electric cooking utensil
- Charcoal (for outside use only)

## SANITATION

- Toilet paper, towelettes
- Soap, liquid detergent (waterless, antibacterial)
- Feminine supplies
- Personal hygiene items
- Plastic garbage bags, ties (for personal sanitation)
- Plastic bucket with tight lid
- Disinfectant or household chlorine bleach

## CLOTHING AND BEDDING

- Include at least one complete change of clothing and footwear per person appropriate for the season and conditions\*
- Sturdy shoes or work boots\*
- Rain gear
- Blankets and sleeping bags
- Hat and gloves
- Sunglasses

## ENTERTAINMENT

- Games (card or board games)\*
- Books for all ages\*

## DOCUMENTS AND OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

Keep these records in a waterproof, portable container:

- Will\*
- Insurance policies\*
- Contracts & deeds\*
- Stocks and bonds\*
- Passports\*
- Social security cards\*
- Immunization records\*
- Bank account numbers\*
- Credit card account numbers and companies\*
- Inventory of valuable household goods\*
- Phone book with important telephone numbers\*
- Family records (birth, marriage, death certificates)\*
- Cash, traveler's checks, and change\*
- Disposable camera\*

**Keep items in airtight plastic bags or containers. Change your stored water supply every six months so it stays fresh. Replace your stored food every six months. Review and update your kit and family needs at least once a year.**

# SECTION TWO:

## Response & Recovery

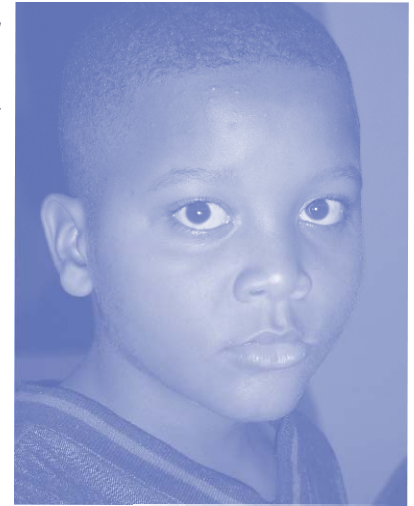
### PRACTICAL TIPS

- ✓ Stay in your home or other shelter during a disaster or emergency
- ✓ Stay off the streets and do not drive around to “see what happened”
- ✓ Do not use anything in your home that has a fire, such as a charcoal grill for cooking or staying warm
- ✓ Listen to your radio for updates and directions from emergency teams
- ✓ Follow the directions of officials
- ✓ Do not hide from officials
- ✓ Stay out of unfamiliar places
- ✓ Do not leave loaded weapons in the reach of children
- ✓ Put a sign on your home that shows you have chosen to stay there so officials can locate you after the emergency passes
- ✓ Keep all of your pets in a safe and secure place. Do not just “let them go”

### NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

Meet with your neighbors to plan how you can work together after a disaster until help arrives. If you're a member of a neighborhood organization, such as a home association or crime watch group, introduce disaster preparedness as a new activity. Know your neighbors' special skills (such as medical, technical) and how to help those that have special needs, such as disabled and elderly persons. Teach your children who in the neighborhood can help them in the event there is a disaster and you cannot get home. Make sure your neighbors know how to contact you at work and where your family meeting place is in the event of a disaster. Set up a system with your neighbors to “signal” for needed help, such as a towel shut across the top of the front door or a red ribbon on their door knob.

## If Disaster Strikes...



- Stay calm. Put your plan into action.
- Check for injuries and give first aid or get help for seriously injured people.
- Listen to your battery powered radio for news and instructions.
- Evacuate, if advised to do so.
- Check for damage in your home.
- Use flashlights—do not light matches or turn on electrical switches if you think there may be damage to your home.
- Check for fires, fire hazards and other household hazards.
- Check (smell) for gas leaks, starting at the water heater. If you smell gas or suspect a leak, turn off the main gas valve, open windows, and get everyone outside quickly. Shut off any other damaged utilities.
- Clean up spilled medicines, bleaches, gasoline and other flammable liquids immediately.
- Put your pets in a safe place.
- Call your family contact--do not use the telephone again unless it is a life-threatening emergency.
- Check on your neighbors, especially elderly or disabled persons.
- Stay away from downed power lines.
- Watch animals as they will be confused and scared and may be dangerous.
- Be careful of snakes and insects. They may be on the move looking for new homes or a place to hide.

## Tips to Help Families Support Their Children

You have been told that a disaster may be heading right for your home. . .what are you going to do? How will you help your children prepare? How can you help with their fears? These are just a few questions that may be going through your head in addition to your own emotions and responsibilities in preparing your home, protecting your property, fulfilling job responsibilities, and keeping yourself safe from harms way. Below are a few simple tips to help you support your children and youth during difficult times.

**1. Don't get caught up in the "hype."** The potential for a disaster is great opportunity for media to increase their audience. Constant exposure to drama that is presented as information for the purpose of entertainment can cause serious emotional issues for children. Limit your family's time in front of the television and tune in for regular updates and alerts.

**2. Have a plan and know what you will do.** It is the unknown that frightens most people. Most children and youth are more disturbed about what they think might happen than by reality. Planning makes the unknown easier for children.



**3. Talk on a level that your child can understand.** Children of all ages will know or sense that something is wrong. Older children should be included in developing the family plan. They should also be encouraged to develop their own plan about things important to them. Younger children can help you pack things such as flash lights or preparing water bottles. Infants and young children may not understand your words, but take the time to hold them and tell them how much you love them and that you will always do your best to care for them. Singing and playing games they recognize can help calm them.

**4. Give children information they need.** When a child asks how bad the expected disaster can be, such as a storm, you can compare it to others they may have experienced. If they see devastation on television explain to them what you will do IF it is that bad. Have them talk about what they think they could do to help protect themselves and their belongings. Talk about the plan and where you will be.

**5. Keep routines and regular schedule.** Routines reinforce to children that things will be staying the same for a while. They are comforted by doing what they are used to doing. This helps them understand that "life goes on." When it gets to the point where you can no longer follow these routines because of the weather, build new routines that relate to your planning and response to the storm.

**6. Make sure children know what to do if you are not around.** If your child is old enough to talk, they should be taught your name. Older children should be taught their address, phone number, and your cell phone number. Make sure your children have some identification on them even if they are with you, such as those sold for shoe laces or an information card in their pocket on how to get a hold of you should you be separated.

**7. Your child's special needs.** If your child has special needs make sure they have a medical alert. This is especially important if they have a need that may not be obvious (such as diabetes, a chronic health condition, or allergy). Teach your child to answer questions about their condition and treatment as soon as they are old enough. This will help ensure that others can care for them in your absence. Also, keep a health history information form on your child in their pocket and make copies to keep with you.

**8. Teach your children to recognize and accept help from emergency officials.** Make sure your children can recognize emergency officials, such as police, Red Cross, firemen, and others. Help them understand that if they are alone they can go to these people for help. It is important that they learn to NOT be afraid and hide from emergency officials. This can make locating them if they are separated from you more difficult.