

Pediatric Emergency Preparedness: State Level Planning

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Hello. I'm Dr. Georgina Peacock, a developmental pediatrician with the CDC's National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. Today's topic is State Level Pediatric Emergency Preparedness.

Children represent 25 percent of the population in the United States; that's about 74 million children under the age of 18. Recent disasters such as Hurricane Katrina, the devastating floods in the Midwest, and the H1N1 influenza pandemic all serve to highlight the extreme vulnerability of children during disaster situations. Each new disaster presents distinct challenges. Programs and practices that manage disaster situations are often unprepared to help children when disasters occur. Lack of coordination, communication failures, inadequate supplies, and delays in the recovery response can lead to negative outcomes and increase morbidity and mortality among children.

Our ability to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters in regards to children depends on an integrated approach in which local, state, and federal responders all share the responsibility of addressing the unique needs of children in disaster situations. An all hazards emergency preparedness response for children in disasters can be accomplished by leveraging the expertise, capabilities, and policies of all groups to clearly and concisely develop plans that prioritize best practices and resources for pediatric disaster management.

A recent report by the National Commission on Children and Disasters includes findings and recommendations to address children's needs during disaster situations. Recommendations relate to children's trauma and physical and mental health; evacuation and transportation of children in child care and school settings; and medical care of children.

The report also provides specific recommendations for the coordination of resources, services, administrative actions, policies, and regulations for state level pediatric emergency preparedness. States play a critical role in the recovery of pediatric health following a disaster and should have emergency preparedness plans that address the unique needs of children.

The Clinician Outreach and Communication Activity, COCA, has a webinar on this topic titled State Level Pediatric Emergency Preparedness. The webinar discusses gaps in pediatric preparedness and reviews national recommendations to improve pediatric emergency preparedness at the state level.

For more information on the emergency preparedness webinar and other related resources, visit emergency.cdc.gov/coca. The American Academy of Pediatrics' disaster preparedness website also has helpful pediatric emergency preparedness tools: www.aap.org/disasters. Thank you.

For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.