



EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING GUIDE FOR CHILD CARE

Publication of this Guide Co-sponsored by:

Child Development Division

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The mission of the Child Development Division is to assure a statewide system that promotes and supports safe, accessible, quality child care for Vermont families.

And

Healthy Child Care Vermont

Healthy Child Care Vermont is a collaborative program of the Vermont Health and the Child Development Division of the Vermont Department for Children and Families.

Fall 2002

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Special Thanks to:

Healthy Child Care Vermont;

California Social Services;

**Emergency Management Division
of the Vermont Public Safety;**

**Child Care Emergency Management
Plan, Massachusetts Emergency
Management Agency and the Office
of Child Development;**

**“Early Childhood News” Planning
for Disaster by Mary Zenor Terrass
January/February 2002**

*for their contributions to this
Planning Guide.*



Emergency Response Planning Guide For Child Care

Vermonters are no strangers to emergencies. In recent years, floods, ice storms and toxic spills from overturned trucks and railroad cars have required temporary closure, evacuation and relocation of children from child care facilities. In such emergencies children may or may not understand what is happening and may be physically or developmentally unable to rescue or protect themselves. Programs that have followed the steps toward preparedness and planning are better able to protect lives and return to normal operation in a shorter time period.

This ***Emergency Response Planning Guide*** serves as a planning tool for Vermont Child Care Programs.

This Guide provides basic preparedness and planning information that can be customized to fit the size of your program. All programs must have a written emergency response plan. Try not to make your plan so complex that people (staff, parents, town officials, etc.) won't be able to recall the necessary steps when faced with an emergency situation.

Where your program is located is important in developing your emergency response plans. Now is the time for you to develop personal relationships with local town emergency managers, fire, law enforcement and public works personnel. These people would most likely respond to an emergency at or near your facility. They can assist you in your determination of potential disaster threats and hazards close to your program.

Your preparedness is a part of the larger plan your local Emergency Management Director maintains. You may want to notify town officials of your willingness to have your facility available to assist other children and families

who may need immediate shelter. Additionally, there may be an immediate need to provide child care for emergency responders.

Reducing the Potential Threat of Emergencies

- Regularly clean and check heating, cooling, gas and electrical systems and verify that they are in good working order.
- Provide one or more carbon monoxide detectors, in addition to regular maintenance and checks of required smoke detectors.
- Ensure that fire extinguishers are properly charged, mounted and easy to reach in case of fire.
- Be sure you know how to use a fire extinguisher properly and train staff or family members in proper usage.
- Ensure that there are never obstructions (locked doors, strollers, storage of teaching materials or recyclables, etc.) that prevent safe exit from the facility.
- Consider the purchase of a generator for back-up power. A generator must be installed by a licensed electrician.

Emergency Response Plan (ERP)

Newsletters, e-mail and parent meetings are all effective methods for communicating changes or updates to your ERP.

Identify a local radio or television station to be your source of broadcast communications. When parents enroll in your program inform them to tune into this station to receive emergency information.

Keep emergency contact information for each child easily accessible. Include both home and work numbers, e-mail addresses, and



cell phone numbers for parents and others who are authorized to be responsible for each child. Have an out-of-town contact number for each child and employee, so that if phone lines are down in a parents' work area, someone within the family's network can be contacted with notification that the child or employee is safe. Inform families to call this out-of-town contact for updated information if needed. Be sure what your back up communications plan will be if phone service is interrupted.

Recommend to parents of children who are medically fragile or have special needs that they provide medical information to emergency responders (i.e. EMT, Fire Departments, etc).

When you have a change in staff, orient them to your ERP and their responsibilities within the plan.

Shelter-in-Place

Shelter-in-place simply means staying inside the building you are in.

During an accidental release of toxic chemicals or other emergencies where air quality is threatened, shelter-in-place keeps the occupants inside a building and out of danger. Local authorities issue orders for shelter-in-place during chemical emergencies. Local officials will relay emergency action steps to the media on a continual basis until the crisis is over.

Once the order for shelter-in-place has been issued, do not leave your building location until you receive official notification that the danger has passed. Close and lock all the doors and windows to the outside. (Windows often seal better when locked.) If possible, bring outdoor pets inside. Turn off all heating systems. Turn off all air conditioners and switch intakes to the closed position. Seal

any gaps around window-type air conditioners. Turn off all exhaust fans in kitchens, bathrooms and any other spaces. Close all fireplace dampers. Close as many internal doors as possible. Use tape and plastic food wrapping, wax paper or aluminum wrap to cover and seal fireplaces, bathroom exhaust and grilles, range vents, dryer vents, and other openings to the outdoors to the extent possible. Seal any obvious gaps around external windows and doors. Close the drapes, curtains or shades for additional protection.

If the vapors begin to bother the staff and children, hold wet cloths or handkerchiefs over the nose and mouth. For a higher degree of protection, go into the bathroom(s), close the door(s) and turn on the shower(s) in a strong spray to "wash" the air. Do not worry about running out of air to breathe, as this is very unlikely in normal homes and buildings.

Emergency Supplies

Maintain an inventory of at least 24 hours of emergency supplies (see list below).

- Make sure you have first aid supplies.
- Consider any child's medical needs when creating your supply inventory.
- Keep on hand portable radios with extra batteries. Check battery expiration date periodically.
- Provide multiple flashlights with extra batteries and bulbs within each room.
- Maintain an adequate supply of personal hygiene and sanitation supplies including toilet paper, paper towels, disposable diapers, wipes and re-sealable plastic bags.
- Instruct staff to keep their own personal necessity items safely stored at the program.



- Store extra bedding and blankets to provide warmth and comfort if utilities fail.
- Include any items necessary to meet the needs of staff and children.

Water

- Provide an adequate supply of commercial bottled drinking water to last staff and children a minimum of 24 hours (1gallon for each child and adult per day).
- Date the bottled water supply, and replenish it at least once per year to keep it fresh. If your water supply has an expiration date, you may have to check it more often than once a year. Note: Water from a potentially contaminated source can be purified for storage by adding 8 drops of chlorine bleach to every one gallon of water.
- Additional water may be needed for flushing toilets. Identify an available source in your area.

Food

- Maintain a dated 24-hour emergency supply of non-perishable food. Consider any child's food allergies when acquiring non-perishable food items. Use and replace food on a regular basis.
- Maintain a supply of disposable bowls and eating utensils and a manually operated can opener.

Communication

Provide a telephone that does not rely on electricity and plugs directly into the phone jack (i.e. old telephone or inexpensive, plug-in phones which don't require batteries).

Evacuation and Off-Site Sheltering

Identify evacuation sites. There may be a building or site that is open to the public during your hours of operation and is within walking distance of your facility. Contact the owner or other appropriate person to determine its availability for possible sheltering. In the event that a disaster would strike a large area surrounding your facility, it is wise to identify a secondary site.

Emergency Backpacks

Emergency backpacks should be kept ready-to-go. For larger programs, there should be a backpack for each group. The backpack should include emergency supplies in portions to meet the evacuation needs of the number of children. Make sure that backpacks are not so cumbersome that they hinder the evacuation process. Emergency information on children, medication, first aid supplies, sanitary items, flashlight, portable radio and comfort items should be included.

Evacuation

- Post a current and accessible written evacuation plan with at least two escape routes.
- Determine which children or staff may require additional assistance to evacuate during a drill or actual emergency.
- Always ensure that you have a system in place to account for children and staff at all times.
- Count children often. Be sure staff know the children for which they are responsible.



Transportation

- Obtain permission from parents to transport their children in an emergency.
- Develop a plan to supplement transportation by the use of volunteers, additional staff, or neighbors.

Emergency Drills and Procedures

- Consider provisions in the event of fire, shelter-in-place, relocation and evacuation. Conduct drills for each type of emergency.
- Be sure your staff know what to do for each type of emergency.
- Develop and practice plans for relocating to more than one other site if necessary.
- In case the electrical system is not functioning establish an alternative way to convey an immediate message to all staff in all areas that they need to shelter-in-place or evacuate immediately.
- Consider including your neighbors, governing board, town emergency officials, local emergency planning committee, businesses, and volunteers in your planning.
- Contact your local Emergency Management Director, fire department, or local Chapter of the American Red Cross to assist with training for your program.
- Ensure that staff are prepared at home, and that they have a family plan.
- Involve parents and emergency personnel in your practice sessions so they may see firsthand how well prepared you are. Emergency personnel are usu-

ally very willing to be of assistance and often have excellent ideas for improving the speed and efficiency of your evacuation. After a practice session schedule a debriefing session. You may wish to invite back parents and emergency personnel. Talk about what worked well and where you need to adjust and update your plan.

Recovering From An Emergency

Programs that are prepared for emergencies have shorter recovery times. Recovery involves efforts to return the program, staff, and children to a normal routine as soon as possible. Depending on the amount of damage, returning to normal operations could be a long-term process. If appropriate be sure that your facility has been inspected prior to re-entry to ensure your facility had not sustained structural damage.

The cumulative crisis-related stress of an emergency can dramatically impact the psychological and physical well-being of children and adults. Develop reasonable expectations for staff and children during the emergency when coping ability is low and frustrations are high. Despite best efforts to provide support and reassurance to children and adults, they may continue to experience symptoms and reactions which may indicate a need for professional consultation. These symptoms may include:

Children: Withdrawn behavior, depression, helplessness, generalized fear, loss of verbal skills, sleep disturbance, loss of toileting skills, anxious attachment and clinging, uncharacteristic hostility or acting out.

Adults: Withdrawal or depression, feelings of inadequacy and helplessness, difficulty in concentration, slowness to respond, substance



abuse, psychosomatic or real physical symptoms (headache, bladder/bowel problems, chest pains, cramps, sleep disturbance, change in food consumption patterns).

Program staff can assist in psychological recovery by giving children and adults correct information about the emergency or event. Provide opportunities to talk and share feelings with others, facilitating communication with loved-ones or family members outside of the program.

Resources

There are many resources and agencies available to assist in your emergency planning efforts. Some of the resources and agencies you may want to contact for further information on emergency planning follow:

- Child Development Division – 1-800-649-2642 and www.state.vt.us/srs/child-care
- Provider groups/associations to share information on emergency planning and emergency resources in your community.
- Local Chapters of the American Red Cross.

- Town Emergency Managers.
- For child care facilities, emergency planning and response books and videos through the Vermont Division of Emergency Management at 1-800-347-0488 or www.dps.state.vt.us/vem/index.html
- The American Academy of Pediatrics Family Readiness Kit offers concrete advice for what families can do in advance to prepare for the disruptions and possible dangers presented by a disaster. www.aap.org/family/frk/frkit.htm
- Emergency assistance agency internet web site addresses (check your local phone book for phone numbers).
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) www.fema.gov
- Federal Small Business Administration www.sba.gov
- American Red Cross www.redcross.org
- Institute for Business and Home Safety www.ibhs.org
- National Child Care Information Center www.nccic.org

