



Helping Children Recover from Exposure to Trauma: Resources for Child Care Providers and Parents

Natural disasters and emergencies can cause major damage in communities. Natural disasters like Hurricane Katrina, the Joplin, Missouri tornado, and the Mississippi river floods can destroy homes and displace families. Terrorist attacks like those on September 11, 2001 and other acts of violence can also threaten our sense of security. Any of these events can cause trauma.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), trauma is the mental or physical response to serious injury or threat. Trauma can produce frightening and painful thoughts and feelings, such as helplessness, detachment, withdrawal, aggression, or irritability, and can cause others to go into shock or experience respiratory problems. Children are very sensitive to trauma and can respond differently to traumatic events. The NIMH suggests that children, as trauma survivors, should receive help right after a traumatic event, and that their needs may continue for weeks or months. Some children may need help much longer and/or may need mental health services to overcome traumatic events.

Early care and education can play an important role in helping children overcome traumatic events. Child care providers and educators may be the first to recognize signs of distress in children, and may have the resources to refer them for specialized help. Early care and education programs offer safe and secure environments for children and help create stability during times of chaos and unpredictability. Parents also benefit from early care and education programs because they can assess the damages to their property and/or apply for disaster assistance without worrying about the safety of their children. Early care and education can also help families return to normalcy by providing care for the children so parents can return to work.

This document provides links to teaching resources, training modules, publications, and other resources to help child care providers and parents help children recover from exposure to a natural disaster or other traumatic event. Additional resources are available in the Emergency Preparedness section of the Office of Child Care Web site at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/child-care-resources-for-disasters-and-emergencies>.

Teaching Resources and Training Modules

- *Promoting Social and Emotional Competence* (Revised 2010) by the Center on the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL), Vanderbilt University, funded by the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families (ACF), within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/training_modules.html. These training modules help providers address the social-emotional needs of young children. The following modules can be used with children exhibiting signs of stress and problem behaviors:

- ◆ Module 3a, *Individualized Intensive Interventions: Determining the Meaning of Challenging Behavior*, provides training about how to talk with families about problematic behavior, how to conduct observations, how to guide functional assessment interviews, and how to support planning; and
- ◆ Module 3b, *Individualized Intensive Interventions: Developing a Behavior Support Plan*, provides tips and ideas for visuals to support young children with challenging behavior, scripted stories for social situations, strategies for teaming with families, positive behavior support, designs for a data collection system to track outcomes, and support plan evaluation.
- *IS-366 Planning for the Needs of Children in Disasters* (June 2010), by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is366.asp>. The course provides guidance for Emergency Managers and individuals who implement children's programs about how to meet the unique needs of children exposed to disasters or emergencies.
- *Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators* (2008) by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), within HHS, http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/Child_Trauma_Toolkit_Final.pdf. This toolkit is a comprehensive resource for educators, including those of preschool children. Topics addressed include:
 - ◆ Psychological and behavioral impact of trauma on children of all ages;
 - ◆ Self-care for educators who are working with traumatized children; and
 - ◆ Strategies for educators in accommodating traumatized children in the classroom setting, as well as identifying when a child may be in need of further intervention.
- *Children, Stress, and Natural Disasters* (n.d.) by the University of Illinois Cooperative Extension Service, <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/disaster/teacher/teacher.html>. This Web-based resource provides tools to prepare teachers and child care providers for working with children who have experienced a disaster, including curriculum guides and suggestions, and activities to help children express feelings:
 - ◆ Children, Stress, and Natural Disasters: A Guide for Teachers, <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/disaster/teacher2/guide.html>; and
 - ◆ Children, Stress, and Natural Disasters: School Activities for Children, <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/disaster/teacher/dispre.html>.
- *Recognizing and Addressing Trauma in Infants, Young Children, and Their Families* (n.d.) by the Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, <http://www.ecmhc.org/tutorials/index.html>. This tutorial was developed to assist early childhood mental health consultants and Early Head Start and Head Start staff in identifying trauma in children and its subsequent developmental impact.

Publications, Articles, and Fact Sheets

- *Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers* (Revised November 2011), by the SAMHSA, within HHS, <http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA12-4732/SMA12-4732.pdf>. This document highlights common reactions to trauma in children and youth and discusses ways parents, caregivers, and teachers can support their recovery.

- *Ten Tips to Help Kids Cope with Disasters* (May 2012), by Save the Children, <http://www.savethechildren.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=8rKLIXMGIpl4E&b=6248025&ct=11770351¬oc=1>. This article provides 10 tips for helping children cope with disasters, which are based on Save the Children's international and domestic experience in working with children experiencing emergencies.
- *Early Childhood Trauma* (August 2010) by the Zero to Six Collaborative Group, National Child Traumatic Stress Network, funded by SAMHSA, within the HHS, http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/nctsn_earlychildhoodtrauma_08-2010final.pdf. This publication discusses how early childhood trauma is unique, identifies behaviors in young children exposed to trauma, and highlights resources to help early educators and child care providers help young children exposed to trauma.
- *Children as Victims of Natural Disasters* (June 2008) by Judith Myers-Walls, Child Development and Family Studies, Purdue University, <http://www.ces.purdue.edu/cfs/topics/HD/resources/ChildrenVictimsNaturalDisasters.pdf>. This fact sheet uses research done on children affected by political violence to offer guidance on how children are affected by natural disasters and provides recommendations on how to support children and families.
- *What Happened to My World? Helping Children Cope with Natural Disaster and Catastrophe* (2005), by Jim Greenman, Bright Horizons Family Solutions, http://www.brighthorizons.com/talktochildren/docs/What_Happened_to_MY_World.pdf. This publication helps parents and teachers understand and support children as they deal with the aftermath of a disaster.
- *Tips for Helping Students Recovering from Traumatic Events* (September 2005) by the U.S. Department of Education, <http://www2.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/recovering/recovering.pdf>. This publication provides tips for parents, students, teachers, and other key school personnel on how to help students recover from traumatic events.
- *Helping Children Cope with Disaster* (2004), by FEMA and the American Red Cross, <http://www.fema.gov/pdf/library/children.pdf>. This publication offers suggestions to parents, caregivers, and other adults on how to help children prepare for disasters and on how to help children cope with the effects of a disaster.
- *Children and Emergency Situations: What We As Adults Can Do To Help* (June 2004), by the Pennsylvania Department of Health, <http://www.bethlehem-pa.gov/pdf/EmergencyBrochure.pdf>. This brochure highlights things adults can do to help children during an emergency, such as terrorist event.
- *Helping Traumatized Children: A Brief Overview for Caregivers* (2002) by Bruce Perry, M.D., Ph.D., The Child Trauma Academy, http://www.uscritefugees.org/2010Website/5_Resources/5_3_For_Service_Providers/5_3_2_Working_with_Refugee_and_Immigrant_Children/The_ChildTrauma_Academy.pdf. This publication addresses issues that may arise while caring for children who have experienced a traumatic event, including information about the effects of trauma on infants.

Additional Resources

The following agencies, organizations, and publications provide resources and State contact information that may be useful to policymakers, providers, and parents in the aftermath of a disaster.

Federal Agencies

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS, <http://emergency.cdc.gov/>
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS), http://www.dhs.gov/files/resources/editorial_0306.shtm
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, DHS, <http://www.fema.gov/response-recovery>
- National Institutes of Mental Health, National Institutes of Health, HHS, <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-violence-and-disasters-community-members/complete-index.shtml>
- Office of Child Care, ACF, HHS, <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/child-care-resources-for-disasters-and-emergencies>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, HHS, http://www.samhsa.gov/children/social_media_feb2011.asp and <http://disasterdistress.samhsa.gov/disasters/hurricanes-and-tropical-storms.aspx>

National Organizations

- American Academy of Pediatrics, <http://www2.aap.org/disasters/index.cfm>
- American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry, <http://www.aacap.org/cs/DisasterTrauma.ResourceCenter>
- American Red Cross, <http://www.redcross.org>
- Child Care Aware (formerly known as National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies), <http://www.naccrra.org/public-policy/policy-issues/disaster-planning-recovery-basics>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children, http://www.naeyc.org/newsroom/Resources_on_coping_with_disasters#Helping_children_after_trauma
- National Association of School Psychologists, http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/naturaldisaster_ho.aspx
- Zero to Three, http://main.zerotothree.org/site/PageServer?pagename=key_disaster&AddInterest=1142

Publications and Fact Sheets

- *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-home Child Care Programs Third Edition* (2011) by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. <http://nrckids.org/CFOC3/index.html>
- *FEMA Disaster Assistance, Fact Sheet 9580.107, Public Assistance for Child Care Services* (2010), by FEMA. http://www.fema.gov/pdf/government/grant/pa/9580_107.pdf

- *National Commission on Children and Disasters: 2010 Report to the President and Congress* (October 2010) by the National Commission on Children and Disasters. <http://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/nccd/20110427002908/http://www.childrenanddisasters.acf.hhs.gov/index.html>
- “Chapter V: Recovery Phase” in *Head Start Emergency Preparedness Manual* (2009), by the Office of Head Start. http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/ep/Head_Start_Emergency_Preparedness_Manual.pdf

* The Child Care State Systems Specialist Network does not endorse any non-Federal organization, publication, or resource.