Promoting Access to Care after an Emergency or Disaster: Illustrative State CCDF Policies

After an emergency or disaster, communities have to recover from the damage left behind by the event. Families and child care providers already in the child care program may need help in maintaining their eligibility for services, while other families, previously not eligible, may now be eligible for services and need child care so they can return to work or search for employment. Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) agencies may want to have a plan in place to ensure existing families and providers continue to receive services with limited interruptions. Agencies may also want to plan for responding to an increase in demand for child care services including how they will help any new families seeking assistance who face unique circumstances due to the disaster/emergency (e.g., missing or lost documents typically necessary to apply for assistance).

In September 2005, the Office of Child Care (OCC) issued an Information Memorandum* that guides State and Territory CCDF Administrators on the use of CCDF monies when responding to Federal and/or State declared emergencies. This information memorandum states that while no additional CCDF funding is available to States/Territories affected by emergencies, CCDF Administrators have program options to continue providing services to families and providers. While some of these options may require amendments to the State/Territory CCDF Plan, CCDF Administrators may want to consider:

- Broadening the protective services definition;
- Examining the income eligibility threshold and what income is counted;
- Using quality dollars to provide assistance to displaced families and/or to provide supply-building grants to providers;
- Changing the eligibility/priority criteria to allow for uninterrupted child care; and
- Using Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) dollars to increase funding resources for child care.

This document highlights examples of State policies that promote continuity of care for families/providers already in the child care program and reduce barriers to services to new families needing assistance after a disaster/emergency. This document also highlights some examples of CCDF agency initiatives to promote child care services after an event. Lastly, this document discusses the benefits of using the CCDF agency Web sites to share information with the public about disaster/emergency resources. Additional resources related to emergency preparedness are available on the Office of Child Care, Child Care Resources for Disasters and Emergencies section of the Web at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/child-care-resources-for-disasters-and-emergencies](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/child-care-resources-for-disasters-and-emergencies).

* This Information Memorandum is available on the OCC Web site at [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/im0503_0.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/occ/im0503_0.pdf).
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The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) also offers resources in other languages at http://www.fema.gov/all-languages.

Examples of State Policies that Promote Continuity of Care and/or Reduce Barrier to Services

Georgia

To ensure victims of natural disasters do not experience additional hardship, the State waives the family fee requirements for new and existing families receiving child care assistance.

The Georgia policy manual states:

Section 6400: Family Fee
6404 - Waiving Family Fees
Federal regulations permit family fees to be waived for clients who need immediate assistance due to unexpected hardships. Fees may be waived for periods not to exceed 60 calendar days for unusual or catastrophic events that place a temporary hardship on the client (i.e. severe illness, fires, layoff from job etc [sic]).

...Fee waivers cannot extend beyond the expiration date of the certification period. Fee waivers should be fairly and equitably applied.
When a fee is waived, the CM [Case Manager] should:

• Assess the fee in the usual manner;
• Document the justification for the fee waiver on the Case Activity Log or;
• Obtain written approval from the county director or designee;
• Notify the client and the child care provider of the changes in writing via Form 62 or other approved State Provider Management System (SPMS) generated letters; and
• File the waiver in the child care record.

Before the 60-day waiver period ends, the fee waiver must be reviewed. The CM must either reinstate the appropriate fee or request an additional waiver. Allow timely notice before expiration of the waiver.

Natural disaster victims (as deemed by the State of Georgia) may receive statewide waivers. The State Office Child Care Unit issues waivers for victims of natural disasters. Copies of these waivers must be filed in the client’s case record.

This resource is available at http://www.odis.dhr.state.ga.us/3000_fam/3540_caps/caps.htm.

Louisiana

To ensure existing providers continue to receive child care payments when programs are closed due to a declared emergency, the State waives the absence day policy for providers experiencing an emergency.

The Louisiana administrative code states:
Title 67, Social Services
§5109. Payment
E. Payment will not be made for absences of more than two days by a child in any calendar month or for an extended closure by a provider of more than two consecutive days in any calendar month. A day of closure, on a normal operating day for the provider, is counted as an absent day for the child(ren) in the provider's care. If a child authorized for full-time care attends child care less than four hours in one day, this will be counted as a half day absent and half the daily rate will be paid to the provider. No absences will be authorized for part-time care. Exception: in cases of a federal/state/locally declared emergency situation, or other special circumstances, the department may at the discretion of the deputy secretary of programs waive this absence policy.

This resource is available at http://www.doa.louisiana.gov/osr/lac/books.htm.

**Maine**

The State reduces barriers to services to new families needing assistance by extending the timeline to provide proof (documentation) of child’s citizenship status.

The Maine policy manual states:

Section 5.00 Eligibility Documentation and Determining Financial Eligibility
5.01.4 Child Born in Maine and Verification of Citizenship Lost or Destroyed: When applicants cannot provide proof of citizenship for a child born in Maine, the application should be processed as usual and the Parent given a thirty (30) day Award Letter. The Parent must supply verification of citizenship within thirty (30) days or the case will be closed. Caseworkers should set a tickler as a reminder to follow up on the requirement. If verification is supplied, the worker should issue an Award Letter for the remaining eleven months.

5.01.5 Child Born Out-of-State and Verification of Citizenship Lost or Destroyed: When applicants cannot provide proof of citizenship for a child born out-of-state, the application should be processed as usual and the Parent given a ninety (90) day Award Letter. The Parent must supply verification of citizenship within ninety (90) days or the case will be closed. Caseworkers should set a tickler as a reminder to follow up on the requirement. If verification is supplied, the worker should issue an Award Letter for the remaining nine months. If verification is not supplied and the parent can provide a copy of the original dated document requesting verification of citizenship and a copy of a second dated document following-up on the status of the request, an additional ninety (90) day Award Letter shall be granted.

This resource is available at http://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/rules/10/chaps10.htm#472.

**Maryland**

If an official emergency is declared, the State has a policy that allows existing providers to continue to receive payments for days they are closed.

The Maryland code states:
G. Payment Policy.
...(9) Family child care and center child care providers shall be paid for those days when the services are closed for:
   (a) An official emergency that is declared by the State or local government....


**Mississippi**

The State continues child care services for existing families who have been out of work due to circumstances beyond their control (e.g., natural disaster). In addition, existing child care providers will continue to receiving payments for days their program is closed for a period of up to 10 days.

The Mississippi policy manual states:

Section 105: Interruption of Child Care Services
105.01 Allowable Leave Time for Parents
   (3) Natural Disaster - Child care services should be continued when parents are off work due to circumstances beyond the parent’s control such as hurricanes, floods, and tornado. Licensed child care providers shall be reimbursed when the center is closed temporarily due to a natural disaster for up to 10 business days per occurrence unless the parent needs to make alternate care arrangements. Unlicensed centers shall be reimbursed for actual attendance only.

This resource is available at http://www.mdhs.state.ms.us/pdfs/eccd_policymanual.pdf.

**North Carolina**

The State has developed a disaster plan for the child care program that supports new and/or existing families affected by a disaster by providing access to safe, alternative child care options. The disaster plan also supports new and/or existing child care providers by allowing those affected by a disaster the opportunity to provide care at a separate location.

The North Carolina policy manual states:

Child Care Subsidy Services Appendix D: Procedures for Emergency Subsidized Child Care
II. Parent Eligibility
When DCD [Division of Child Development] has determined that emergency subsidized child care (SCC) will be offered, child care services can be provided to families affected by an emergency for up to four months without regard to income and without a parental fee. In certain circumstances, emergency services may be provided beyond the four (4) month period. Refer to Section II.B below.

A family is considered to be affected by the emergency when they have suffered loss due to property damage or loss of income as a result of damage to work facility. The local purchasing agency (LPA) may accept the client’s statement that she was affected by the emergency, unless questionable. If the client statement is questionable, contact the Local Emergency Management Coordinator or other government agencies for verification and document that the family was affected in the comment section of the Emergency Child Care Voucher (DCD-0447).
A. Child Care Voucher Information

In situations where individuals need subsidized child care, an Application for Child Care Services (DCD-0456) does not have to be completed. However, if available, a Child Care Voucher (DCD-0446) must be completed by the LPA for all new children. Include the codes mentioned in Agency Information Needed, Section II.A.2 on the Child Care Voucher.

The Emergency Child Care Voucher (DCD-0447) may be substituted if the Child Care Voucher (DCD-0446) is not available. The local DSS [Division of Social Services] or LPA should develop a temporary voucher by hand if the Child Care Voucher (DCD-0446) and the Emergency Child Care Voucher (DCD-0447) are not available. The information noted below must be obtained from the parent or guardian, and agency and provider information must be recorded on the temporary voucher.

1. Information needed from the parent or guardian includes:
   a. Child’s name;
   b. Age of child and the date of birth, if available;
   c. Parent’s or guardian’s name and address (must indicate if it is a relative’s or friend’s address);
   d. Telephone number (must indicate if it is a relative’s or friend’s telephone number);
   e. Eligibility period (up to four (4) months);
   f. Hours that care is needed (the Division of Child Development will allow reimbursement for evening, overnight, and weekend care, if needed); and
   g. Signature of parent/guardian and date the parent or guardian signed the voucher.

2. Agency information needed includes:
   a. The county where the agency is located;
   b. The date the form is completed;
   c. The claim number, if available;
   d. The family case number will be shown as EMERGY;
   e. The assigned voucher number;
      NOTE: A log of the vouchers issued must be maintained;
   f. The FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] claim number, if available;
      NOTE: Every family may not have a FEMA claim number;
   g. The Child ID Number will be assigned later;
   h. The Category Code is 019 and there is no family fee;
   i. The Fund Source is 85;
   j. The Need Reason is “Disaster Assistance” and the Need Reason Code is 851 for full-time care, 852 for 75% care and 853 for 50% care;
   k. The transportation code is 859 and the service provider must be in compliance for transportation requirements, such as having a valid driver’s license and insurance; and
   l. The income and family size are not needed.

The agency representative must print their name, sign and date the form after it has been signed by the parent/guardian. The attendance sheets must be completed by the provider. The agency must collect the forms and attendance sheets. These forms must be submitted monthly to DCD for payment, if payment will not be made through the State’s SCC Reimbursement System.
NOTE: These procedures apply to all types of child care programs currently enrolled in the subsidy program which must relocate due to the emergency, such as licensed and nonlicensed homes, and school-age care programs. Also, centers that are not licensed for specific age groups may serve those ages as long as reasonable staff/child ratio is maintained during the emergency period as approved by DCD staff.

3. Any provider accepting a Subsidized Child Care Voucher during an emergency period must include the:
   a. Provider’s name;
   b. Provider’s telephone number;
   c. Facility name if it is different than provider’s name;
   d. Facility ID number or license number, if assigned;
   e. County in which care is given;
   f. Address of the site where the child is receiving care;
   g. Owner or sponsor of the program;
   h. Telephone number of the owner or sponsor of the child care program;
   i. Mailing address for payment;
   j. Signature of the person accepting the voucher and their name in print;
   k. Provider’s social security number or tax I.D. number; and
   l. Enrollment date of the child.

The Provider must complete their portion of the voucher. The original voucher must be returned to the LPA’s mailing address that is located at the top of the form. The provider must keep one copy of the voucher for the program’s files. The provider must submit accurate attendance sheets to the LPA.

B. Procedure for Extending Emergency Care
In some situations, there may still be a justifiable need for emergency subsidized child care beyond the four (4) month period. These cases must be approved for extended emergency care by the LPA and by the Subsidy Services Consultant or DCD staff in the Subsidy Services Section. The following procedures apply:
1. The local LPA must verify circumstances if a child still needs care after four (4) months of emergency child care;
2. The parent or guardian must apply for extended emergency care;
3. Family size must be documented;
4. The parent’s or guardian’s income must be documented, even if the income is zero; and
5. The LPA should document in the case narrative a brief description of the need for and length of extended emergency subsidized child care.

III. Provider Participation
A. Licensed Programs Currently Enrolled that are Affected by a Disaster
If a licensed provider is already enrolled in the SCC Program, but is not operational due to flooding or fire from hurricane, adverse weather or other disasters, the program may operate temporarily in another location. The following procedures will apply:
1. A Division of Child Development (DCD) Regulatory Services Section Licensing Consultant, Subsidy Services Consultant, or other DCD staff must make an on-site visit to the temporary location.
2. Programs providing emergency child care must have at least one (1) qualified child care staff person present at the location. Other staff may be temporary. Reasonable staff/child ratios will need to be maintained and approved by DCD staff.

3. If DCD staff receives information that a licensed program is operating in a temporary location, every effort will be made to inform the LPA so they will be aware of the site where the children are being served.

4. If the LPA receives information that a licensed program is operating in a temporary location, then the LPA should immediately inform the local Regulatory Services Section Licensing Consultant or staff at the DCD office in Raleigh. Once DCD obtains the address of the site where the care is being provided they will arrange for an on-site visit of the program to be conducted.

5. If a provider temporarily relocates to another county they would not have to re-enroll unless a new family requests services for their child in the new county.

6. Reimbursement for child care will continue under the facility’s existing name, facility ID number and payment rates.

7. Payment will be made through Fund Source 85.

8. A Child Care Voucher must be completed on each child. See Emergency Child Care Voucher (DCD-0447).

9. Accurate attendance must be kept. The LPA should make a supply of attendance sheets available to the provider.

B. Enrolling Licensed Programs on a Temporary Basis

If a licensed provider is not already enrolled in the SCC Program, provider enrollment applications can be completed via telephone call with Raleigh-based DCD staff or during an on-site visit by a DCD Regulatory Services Section Licensing or Subsidy Services Consultants. A Subsidized Child Care (SCC) Approval Notice must be processed. The following procedures will apply:

1. The payment rate will be the county market rate for each age group;

2. The transportation rate will be $38.00 per month for children ages three (3) years and older and $42 per month for children under age three (3) and for children with special needs;

3. Payment will be made through Fund Source 85;

4. A Child Care Voucher must be completed for each child. See Emergency Child Care Voucher (DCD-0447); and

5. Accurate attendance must be kept. The LPA should make a supply of attendance sheets available to the provider.

C. Other Programs that are Eligible for Emergency Subsidized Child Care Reimbursement

1. Religious-sponsored child care programs that are not licensed nor G.S. 110-106 approved;

2. Shelter based emergency programs that are not licensed;

3. Mothers Morning Out or Preschool Programs that are not licensed; and

4. Religious-sponsored programs that are operating under G.S.110-106 and are willing to provide emergency child care temporarily.

D. Reimbursement Procedures for Other Programs that are Eligible for Emergency Subsidized Child Care Reimbursement

The programs listed above must follow the procedures below in order to be reimbursed for providing Emergency Subsidized Child Care.

1. A Regulatory Services Section Licensing Consultant, Subsidy Services Consultant, or another DCD staff must make an on-site visit;
2. At least one (1) person present must be qualified to provide child care. Other staff may be temporary. Reasonable staff/child ratio will need to be maintained and approved by DCD staff;
3. A Child Care Voucher must be completed on each child. See Emergency Child Care Voucher (DCD-0447);
4. Payment will be made directly by DCD;
   NOTE: These providers will not be entered into the SCC Reimbursement System.
5. The payment rate will be the county market rate for each age group;
6. Transportation rate will be $38.00 per month for children ages three years and older and $42 per month for children under age three (3) and for children with special needs;
7. Payment will be made through Fund Source 85;
8. A Child Care Voucher must be completed for each child. See Section II.A, above, Child Care Voucher Information; and
9. Accurate attendance must be kept and the LPA should make a supply of attendance sheets available to the provider.

This resource is available at http://info.dhhs.state.nc.us/olm/manuals/dcd/ccs/man/index.htm.

Examples of CCDF Agency Initiatives to Promote Services after a Disaster/Emergency

The following are some examples of State initiatives designed to promote access to services after a disaster or emergency.

- When determining income eligibility, Arizona excludes any assistance received under the Federal Disaster Relief Act. The Arizona administrative code states:

  G. Excluded Income. The Department shall exclude the items listed in this subsection when determining a family's gross monthly income.
  
  25. Disaster relief funds and emergency assistance provided under the Federal Disaster Relief Act, and comparable assistance provided by a state or local government, or disaster assistance organization

The Arizona Administrative Codes are available at http://www.azsos.gov/public_services/Title_06/6-05.htm#Article_49.

- To ensure the most vulnerable populations have access to child care services, Georgia considers natural disaster victims a priority population when determining eligibility. The Georgia policy manual states:

  Section 6200: Application Process
  6202 - Priority List
  DHS [Department of Human Services] has established service priorities to ensure that certain segments of the population receive subsidized child care, if eligible. Case Managers should screen all CAPS [Childcare and Parent Services] applications to determine if applicants meet the criteria for priority services.
Families that appear to meet the criteria for priority services should be contacted and eligibility determined promptly.

The priority guidelines are applied statewide. The segments of the population who receive priority child care services, if needed, are:

- Natural disaster victims as defined by the state.


- When enrolling parents from the waiting list, Maine considers victims of catastrophic events (as defined by the State) as a priority population. The Maine policy manual states:

10.03 Enrolling Parents from the Waiting List

10.03.4 Catastrophic Events Exceptions to providing services on a first-come, first-served basis may be made in cases of catastrophic events including but not limited to fires, storms or accidents, Family emergencies, including but not limited surgery and other medical procedures or children without a home as directed by the Department using funds restricted for that specific at risk target group.


- In Minnesota, the CCDF Agency gives counties the option of paying higher reimbursement rates to providers caring for at-risk children, which include children experiencing at-risk environmental factors like a Federal or State declared disaster. The Minnesota Statutes also authorize the Commissioner of the Department of Human Services (DHS) to waive eligibility requirements (e.g., allowable activities, documentation, amount of authorized care, job search, minimum number of hours employed, and income exclusions) for up to nine months in federally declared disaster areas. Counties submit waivers to DHS. DHS then notifies the House chairs/Senate committees with jurisdiction over the statutes. Counties have to submit waivers ten days before the effective date of the waiver granted.

Chapter 9: Payments, 9.54: Special Needs
For Children in the At-Risk Population
Your county may also choose to pay special needs rates to certain populations defined as at-risk in your County Child Care Plan. The county must have DHS approval for these rates to be paid. At-risk means environmental or familial factors exist that create barriers to a child’s optimal achievement. This could include, but is not limited to:

- A federal or state disaster....

...If your county has chosen to pay special needs rates to certain populations defined as at-risk in your County Child Care Plan:
• If there are 4 or more providers offering child care for children in a specific at-risk category, pay the lesser of the 75% rate, the rate negotiated with the provider by the county, or the provider’s rate.
• If there are fewer than 4 such providers, pay the lesser of the rate negotiated with the provider or the provider’s rate.


119B.26 Authority to Waive Requirements During Disaster Periods
The commissioner may waive requirements under this chapter for up to nine months after the disaster in areas where a federal disaster has been declared under United States Code, title 42, section 5121, et seq., or the governor has exercised authority under chapter 12. The commissioner shall notify the chairs of the house of representatives and senate committees with jurisdiction over this chapter and the house of representatives Ways and Means Committee ten days before the effective date of any waiver granted under this section.

The Minnesota Statutes 2012, Chapter 119B Child Care Programs is available at https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/?id=119B&format=pdf.

- Montana uses quality dollars to offer mini grants to child care programs. These grants can be used for different initiatives, including helping programs affected by natural disasters.

7-4a: Best Beginnings Quality Initiatives: Mini-Grants
Supersedes: Child Care 7-3 (2/1/11)
References: 45 CFR Part 98.51(b)(2)(ii)

General Information: The Best Beginnings Mini Grants are administered by each Resource and Referral agency for their service delivery area and are funded by Best Beginnings Quality dollars.

Mini Grant Use: Mini grants are intended to allow for localized application and to ensure flexibility in awarding amounts consistent with the needs of providers. Generally, mini grants should be used for the purposes of:
...• Assistance for providers affected by natural disasters....

Mini Grant Limitations: Mini grants are not to be used for programs formally enrolled in STARS [Best Beginnings Quality Program] for incentives because STARS incentives can be used for like purposes. Providers who have received incentive monies through STARS and are no longer enrolled in STARS will have to wait one year from the date of STARS payment to apply for a mini grant.

Providers who have been disqualified with cause from the CACFP (Child and Adult Care Food Program) or if they or anyone related to the business have had 3 strikes in the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program due to fraud may not receive Mini Grants. Each CCR&R [Child Care Resource and Referral] can develop additional requirements that do not compromise the intent mentioned in the RFP (Request for Proposal) or PMP (Program Management Plan) and shall maintain a review team and determine the appropriate review/scoring process, keeping in mind there should not be a perceived or real sense of favoritism and/or conflict of interest.
Mini Grant Awards: Mini grants are available in a single grant award for a total not to exceed $2,000 for a group/family provider and $3,000 for a center provider. Providers must be in business for the duration of the grant, or will refund the State in full. A provider is eligible to receive another mini grant only after an existing grant period (1 year) comes to an end. They must wait until their previous grant end date passes until they are eligible to apply again. CCR&R agencies have the flexibility to determine the frequency they will award and process applications. Allocations of funding will be made quarterly to the CCR&R agencies from the State.

Mini Grant Form: CCR&R agencies will use the mini grant application form and information page as posted on the Best Beginnings web site making it available to providers electronically and on paper – whichever the provider prefers. CCR&R agencies may still provide technical assistance to providers in completing the forms, but the individual/department providing technical assistance should not be part of the mini grant review team.

See the ECSB [Early Childhood Services Bureau] Procedure Manual for processing.


Benefits of Posting Information on CCDF Agency Web Sites

The Internet is a useful communication tool that gives users the ability to share information at a faster rate and to a wider audience. Posting information online gives users unlimited access to information (e.g., 24 hours/day 7 days/week), which may be particularly important after a disaster or emergency strikes an area.

Families and providers in areas affected by a disaster or emergency may have questions about their child care options, their responsibilities around continued eligibility, and/or next steps regarding how to apply for disaster assistance. Using the CCDF Agency Web sites to communicate to the public can help:

- Reduce some of the anxiety and confusion families/providers may have about their responsibilities.
- Increase CCDF agency staff efficiency by reducing the amount of time spent on answering the same questions and/or providing the same type of information.
- Increase CCDF agency presence and credibility in the communities by providing up-to-date information about the next steps following a disaster or emergency.
- Increase CCDF agency’s ability to convey necessary information in multiple languages.

The following are links to a sample of CCDF agencies that post information on their Web sites:

New York Office of Children and Family Services,
http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/default.asp
- Provides information and resources for parents and providers on:
  - FEMA and SBA disaster assistance, including next steps, documentation requirements, and important deadlines for assistance;
  - Returning home after a natural disaster, such as a flood; and
Helping children cope with trauma.

**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services,**
[http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/providers/pv_emergency.asp](http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/providers/pv_emergency.asp)
- Provides resources for providers on:
  - Emergency preparedness planning tips to consider and a template for developing plan.
  - State EPR agencies, Web sites, and links to other federal agencies.
  - Additional resources to help in planning process and checklists.

**North Dakota Department of Human Services,** [http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/)
- Provides information and resources on:
  - How to maintain good mental health, cope with stress, and access mental health services.
  - Disaster/emergency related news affecting the State, links disaster assistance, and a copy of the State early childhood services emergency plan for floods; and
  - Provider resources and links to other agencies in the State.

**West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources,**
- Provides resources for providers on:
  - Disaster planning, including forms for centers, facilities, and FCC.
  - State legislation around emergency planning.
  - Contact information for local emergency agencies.

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