

March 8, 2013

The Honorable Steve Bullock
Governor of Montana
Helena, Montana 59620

Dear Governor Bullock:

Hurricane Sandy once again brought to light the important issue of child care following disasters. When child care facilities are damaged and unable to continue providing services, it places a great deal of added stress on families that are already trying to recover from the disaster. We are writing to request that you make child care a priority in your state.

After a disaster, child care is often an immediate concern because families need a safe and healthy environment for their children. Parents cannot return to work and focus on rebuilding their lives when there is no child care available. Additionally, like schools, child care is a critical piece of the community infrastructure and helps children return to normalcy, while mitigating traumatic effects of the disaster.

Ensuring the well-being of young children is one of our highest objectives at the Administration for Children and Families (ACF). Through collaboration with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and public and private partners, we have worked to underscore the importance of emergency preparedness and response planning for child care. As part of these efforts, we encourage you to consider the following:

- **Statewide Disaster Plan for Child Care.** In the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy, extensive damage to the child care infrastructure made restoration of child care services difficult. States can prepare for these challenges by developing a statewide disaster plan for child care, including recognition of child care as an essential community service. ACF administers the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a program to improve the availability and quality of child care for low-income families. We have provided guidance (below) on this topic and this summer's submission of the CCDF Plan provides a timely opportunity to share your state's goals and achievements.

RESOURCE: Guidance to Assist Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies in developing emergency preparedness and response plans for child care. (CCDF-ACF-IM-2011-01) Available at: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/im-2011-01>.

- **Ensuring Child Care Providers are Prepared.** Many states have made great progress enacting strong requirements for child care providers to protect children in cases of emergency. However, others have yet to put in place what we believe are important safeguards. In particular, many states do not require child care providers to include provisions for children with special needs in their emergency and disaster plans. Save the Children, a long-time collaborative partner of ACF, recently published a report (below) that highlighted this as an area in need of significant improvement.

RESOURCE: Save the Children, "A National Report Card on Protecting Children in Disasters" (2012). Available at: <http://www.savethechildren.org/atf/cf/%7B9def2ebe-10ae-432c-9bd0-df91d2eba74a%7D/STC%20DISASTER%20REPORT12%20FINAL.PDF>.

It is our sincere hope that you understand the critical nature of this planning. We appreciate your consideration, and please contact either one of us for assistance in addressing this important need.

Sincerely,



George H. Sheldon
Acting Assistant Secretary
Administration for Children and Families



W. Craig Fugate
Administrator
Federal Emergency Management Agency