

EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLANNING GUIDE FOR IOWA CHILD CARE

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Thomas J. Vilsack, Governor

▪ **Sally J. Pederson, Lt. Governor**

Iowa Version

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Emergency Response Planning Guide For Iowa Child Care

Iowans are not 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 and families from neighborhoods, child care facilities or schools. In such emergencies, children may or may not understand what is happening. They may be physically and/or developmentally unable to rescue and protect themselves. Programs that have followed steps toward preparedness and planning are better able to protect lives and return to normal operation in a shorter time period.

The **Emergency Response Planning (ERP) Guide** serves as a planning tool for Iowa child care programs. This Guide provides basic preparedness and planning information that can be customized to fit the size of your program. All Iowa child care centers and child development home programs are required to have written emergency and disaster plans. Caution should be taken to assure your plan is not so complex that people (staff, parents, town/county officials, etc.) won't be able to recall the necessary steps when faced with an emergency situation.

The location of your program is important in developing your emergency response plans. Now is the time for you to develop personal relationships with local city/town/county emergency managers, fire, emergency medical services, 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 possible disaster threats and hazards close to your program.

Your preparedness is a part of the larger plan that your local Emergency Management Director maintains. You may want to notify city/town/county 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 do a facility safety check to identify possible threats and hazards
- Regularly clean and check heating, cooling, gas and electrical systems. 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 recycle bins, etc.) that prevent safe exit from the facility.
- Consider the purchase of a generator for back-up power. A licensed electrician must install a generator.

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 home, work, and mobile/cellular phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and cell phone numbers for parents and/or others who are authorized to be responsible for each child. Have an out-of-town contact number for each child and employee. This way, if phone lines are down in a parents' work area, someone within the family's network can be notified 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. Suggest to parents of children who are medically fragile or have special needs that they provide medical information to your facility and their local emergency responders (i.e. EMT, Fire Departments, etc). If the emergency responding unit is different for your facility than that of their home location, please advise the parents to contact this unit as well. Complete in-services and mock drills to assess that their needs will be met and assure how their needs will be taken care of in the event of an emergency situation. 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 unintentional release of toxic chemicals or other emergencies where air quality is threatened, shelter-in-place keeps the occupants inside of a building and out of potential danger. Local authorities will issue orders for shelter-in-place during the event of a chemical emergency. Local officials will relay emergency action steps to the media on a continual basis until the incident 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. To maintain a secure seal, close and lock all the doors and windows to the outside. Assure that ALL facility staff know how to unlock doors quickly in the event that a fire or interior threat would occur during the "shelter-in" place incident. If possible, bring outdoor pets inside. Turn off all heating and air conditioning systems. Switch air intakes to the closed position. Seal any gaps around window- installed 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, grilles, range vents, dryer vents, and other openings to the outdoors to

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the best 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. 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- medication* 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 (1 gallon 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.
- Additional *water 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 *manuall- 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). Assure that all rooms have telephone jack capabilities.

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. Include in your plan issues of “safe travel”. Reality of the situation would be very difficult to assure safe travel of children.

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 delay the evacuation process or cause back injury. 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 and identified meeting locations.
- 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.

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- 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, “child-down”, relocation and evacuation. Conduct drills for each type of emergency.
- Be sure your staff knows 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, create an alternative way to spread 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, emergency medical services, fire department, or local Chapter of the American Red Cross to assist with training your program staff.
- Ensure that staff is 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 usually very willing to help 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

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long-term process. If appropriate, be sure that your facility has been inspected prior to re-entry to ensure your facility has not sustained structural damage.

The combined 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 concentrating, 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 staff 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:

- Iowa Department of Public Health website on Terrorism: <http://www.idph.state.ia.us>
- Local Chapters of the American Red Cross: <http://www.redcross.org/>
- City/Town/County Emergency Managers. Contact your county office for public health.
- 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 THIS IS EXCELLENT.
- 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
- National Emergency Medical Services for Children: www.ems-c.org

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Emergency Management Director Name: _____ **Telephone** _____

Alternative Telephone _____

Local Chapter of American Red Cross Telephone _____

National Alert Code

SEVERE (Color RED) severe risk of terror attack.

HIGH (Color ORANGE) high risk of terror attack.

ELEVATED (Color YELLOW) elevated risk of terror attack.

GUARDED (Color BLUE) guarded risk of terror attack.

LOW (Color GREEN) low risk of terror attack.