



Emergency Preparedness for Children with Special Needs

"I used to get overwhelmed about emergency preparedness, but once I broke it down into small steps it got easier. Each week I put a few items on my shopping list. Then I got other supplies at second hand stores and the Red Cross. I feel better knowing I'm ready instead of worrying about getting ready". –Parent

In an emergency, we all have to plan to be self sufficient and possibly spend several days without utilities, medical aid or communications.

Three Ways to Get Ready

1. *Think* about your child's special needs in an emergency.
2. *Plan* now for emergencies that can happen in your area.
3. *Pack* an emergency supplies kit.

1. Think about your child's special needs in an emergency.

Consider your child's needs if there was:

- No water
- No electricity, telephone, heat, air conditioning, computer
- No local access to prescription refills or health products
- No refrigeration
- Separation from your family
- Evacuation to a shelter or elsewhere
- Confinement to home
- Limited health care access
- Lack of transportation
- Limited emergency rescue services

2. Planning for Special Needs

- Talk with your family about different types of emergencies, how to prepare for them, and how to care for your child with special needs during an emergency.
- Talk with your child's doctor or health care team about how to care for your child during different types of emergencies. Develop a plan for how you will communicate with your child's care team during an emergency.

- Plan for back up sources of heat, refrigeration, and electricity. Your family can use an emergency shelter for storing medicine, charging equipment, help with medical needs, getting a meal and more. You do not have to be staying in a shelter to use its resources.
- If your child depends on dialysis or other life sustaining treatment, know the location of more than one facility and find out *their* plans for emergencies and how your child will get treatment, medications etc. Get their emergency contact numbers (these may be out of state).
- Store extra medicines and equipment at your child's school.
- Create and practice an escape plan for your home. Are there clear exit paths for a child who uses mobility devices or has vision loss?
- For each person in the home, keep a pair of shoes stored under their bed to use in an evacuation.
- Talk to your local police and fire departments to see if they have emergency services or plans for people with special needs.
- Plan for your child's service animal.
- Obtain a medical alert and/or identification bracelet for your child.
- In the event of a disaster, listen to your emergency radio station (710-AM KIRO for King, Kitsap, and North Mason Counties)

Create a Support Network

A support network includes family, neighbors or friends that can help you and your child. They may be your first source of help in an emergency.

- Tell your support network about your child's special needs and where your emergency supplies are stored.
- Give a trusted member of your network a key to your house or apartment.
- Agree upon a system with your neighbors to signal for help if phones and electricity are not working.
- Show others how to handle your child's wheelchair or other equipment.
- Talk to other families who have a child with the same condition as your child about ideas and tips.

Continued

3. Pack Emergency Supplies Including:

- A copy of your child's up to date Emergency Information Form and care plan (sample forms at <http://www.cshcn.org/Docs/InCaseofEmergency.doc> and <http://www.aap.org/advocacy/eif.doc>).
- Current medical information and important records stored in an easy to carry format such as a CD or flash drive. Keep at least one paper copy in a waterproof bag.
- Two-weeks worth of medical supplies such as syringes, dressing materials, nasal cannulas, or suction catheters.
- At least a 3 day supply of medications-fourteen days is ideal. It may be a challenge to get extra medications for emergencies, so talk with your child's doctor about how to obtain an extra supply. Keep prescription information in your wallet, car, and survival kit, along with the name, location and phone number of an out of town pharmacy. Ask your doctor or pharmacist how to properly store medication for use in an emergency. In a disaster, if you can't contact your doctor or pharmacy, you can ask for help from emergency responders or staff at emergency shelters or service centers. You can also call your local Red Cross or the Washington State Information Network 211.
- Back up power support (generator or battery) for electrical medical equipment. Due to deadly fumes, use generators, camp stoves or grills outdoors.
- Have a way to charge your cell phone without electricity. You can use a car adaptor or crank radio/flashlight that includes a cell phone charger. These are available at home and hardware stores. Look for battery powered or travel versions of medical equipment your child uses.
- An AC adaptor for your car that can run small electrical equipment such as a nebulizer. Know how long your battery will last while using the adaptor.
- Manual wheelchair or other non-electric equipment.
- Extra contact lenses, glasses, and lens supplies.
- Batteries for hearing aids, communication devices
- Special dietary foods and supplies
- Cooler and chemical ice packs for storing medications that must be kept cold.
- Items that calm or entertain your child.
- Identification to be carried by each child in case your family gets separated.
- Proof of service animal status to insure it can go with you into a shelter.

Continued

- Pack a smaller “to go” version of items for use in an evacuation. See link below for more information.

Store your supplies in water and pest-proof containers that are easy to get to. Update supplies and emergency contact and medical forms each year and replace water every six months. Store batteries out of devices until ready to use.

Links to Other Emergency Preparedness Resources for Special Needs

- **The American Red Cross:**
http://www.redcross.org/museum/prepare_org/disabilities/disabilitiesprep.htm
Includes tips for people with:
 - cognitive disabilities
 - communication disabilities
 - disabilities and medical concerns
 - environmental or chemical sensitivities
 - life support systems
 - mobility concerns
 - psychiatric disorders
 - visual disabilities / hearing loss
 - service animals
- **The Department of Homeland Security.** Instructional video on emergency preparedness for individuals with disabilities and or special needs.
http://www.ready.gov/america/about/_flash/movie14.html
- **Disability Resource Center.** Emergency preparedness for special needs including specific tips by disability.
<http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/ppp/disabil.htm>
- **Family Voices.** “Emergencies and Disasters: Keeping Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs Safe”.
<http://www.familyvoices.org/work/caring?id=0004>
- **National Hemophilia Foundation.** Individual and family preparedness.
<http://www.hemophilia.org/NHFWeb/Resource/StaticPages/menu0/menu8/menu125/AtAGlanceIndividual.pdf>
- **Washington State Department of Health.** Emergency Resource Guide. Includes disability specific planning.
http://www.doh.wa.gov/phepr/handbook/hbk_pdf/Emer_Res_Guide07.pdf
- **U. S. Department of Health and Human Services.** Helping children with cognitive disabilities cope with disaster.
<http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/add/Sept11/addcoping.html>

We wish to thank the Washington State Family to Family Health Information Center, the Family Advisory Board of Seattle Children’s Hospital, and the American Red Cross, Serving King and Kitsap Counties.

© rev.2011 Seattle Children's Hospital All rights reserved.