



# Disaster and Families of Children with Disabilities and Medical Needs

## What Health Care Providers and Emergency Managers Need to Know



**The CDC estimates that 1 in 5 children in the US has a special health care need.**

Families of disabled children need "facilitated" pre-event disaster risk reduction planning to be "disaster ready".

**Families vary in their understanding of what they need to prepare for in a disaster as does their ability to cope with disaster preparedness information.**

Disaster preparedness including equipment troubleshooting should be a regular part of discharge planning of every medically complex child. It should be reviewed at the first follow-up visit after discharge and periodically as the child's medical needs change.



**Parents of children with disabilities and medical needs report that they can be easily overwhelmed.**

Disaster readiness information is best shared in person and using a variety of methods including 1:1 instruction, online forums, videos, brochures, and applications. Educational material should be provided in the language the family understands and be American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant.



**Families may not know what will happen if their child is at school during a disaster.**

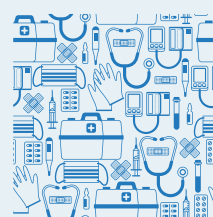
Parents and school leaders should discuss emergency and disaster procedures as part of the child's Individual Education Plan (IEP). Parents should know how to communicate with the school and what to do to reunify with their child during a disaster.



**When available provide enrollment information on local or regional disability alert registries**

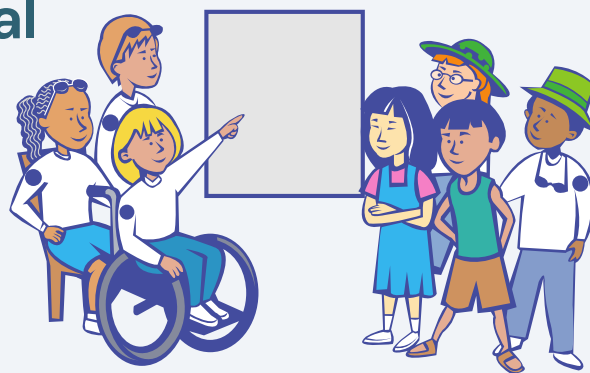
Disability alert registries play an important role in early warning allowing families more time to move out of harm's way.

**Medically complex children who depend on technology to survive are prone to equipment failures during a disaster.**



Families with children who have disabilities are more likely to seek shelter, power, water, equipment, supplies, and assistance from EMS and the nearest hospital if they do not have a family disaster plan. It is recommended that these families create a support network of at least 5 people who are willing to check on them and help them in a disaster.

**Children with disabilities and medical needs rely on their parents, caretakers, and school personnel to plan and assure their safety if a disaster occurs while at school.**



Make sure parents of disabled children know how the school will notify them in a disaster. These methods can include emergency notifications to parents and caregivers via phone, text, and/or social media. Encourage schools to practice both notification and evacuation procedures inclusive of children with disabilities and special health care needs as part of disaster drills.

**Families of children with disabilities and medical needs who live in disaster-prone areas are known to struggle after a disaster.**

These families have higher rates of adverse consequences when disaster strikes including life threats, food insecurity, poverty, disrupted access to health care, medication, medical supplies, and homelessness.



**Primary Care Providers play a critical role in educating families of children on what to do in a disaster.**

When disaster preparedness is included as part of routine anticipatory guidance, families are more likely to engage in home preparedness activities.

Work with the child's complex care specialists to authorize extra supplies of formula, nutritional supplements, medications, and instructions on what to do if equipment fails. It is the responsibility of the provider to include this information.



**Families of children with disabilities and medical needs report that they need help connecting to local resources for sheltering in place and evacuation.**

Disaster risk reduction relies on the primary and specialty care health providers being willing to communicate to the family the importance of being informed, making a plan, and building a kit. Providing a list of local resources can assist families with their emergency plan.



**Scan the QR code for More Disaster Information**