

Department of Human Services
Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing

Child Care Centers and Homes
Letter Series 2013-02

Date: May 21, 2013
To: All Child Care Providers
From: James S. Sinnamon, Director 
Child Care Licensing Division
Subject: Emergency and Disaster Planning

I recently reviewed a 2012 report prepared by the organization *Save the Children*. "A National Report Card on Protecting Children During Disasters: Is America Prepared to Protect Our Most Vulnerable Children in Emergencies?" identifies several plans that all child care providers should develop and implement.

After yesterday's devastating tornado in Moore, OK, I wanted to share these recommendations with you. As the report states, and experience shows, "emergencies, natural or manmade, can and do take place during the workday, a time when our nation's youngest, most vulnerable citizens are at school or in child care."

A Plan for Evacuating Children in Child Care

All regulated child care facilities should have a written plan for evacuating and moving children to a safe location for multiple types of disasters.

If your local community floods, do you have plans for moving children to higher ground or another safe place?

A Plan for Reuniting Families after a Disaster

All child care facilities should have a written plan to notify parents of an emergency and reunite parents with their children.

Do you have an emergency communication and reunification plan, including multiple emergency contact numbers for you and an alternate, in the event of an emergency?

A Plan for Children with Disabilities and Those with Access and Functional Needs

All child care facilities should have a written plan that accounts for any special assistance an infant, toddler, or child with physical, emotional, behavioral or mental health challenges may need.

If there is a fire, do you have a plan for evacuating and transporting infants or children in wheelchairs?

The administrative rules for homes and centers do not specifically require these plans; however, I strongly encourage every child care facility to consider all potential emergency situations and develop plans to address them. Our technical assistance and consultation manuals provide the following rationale for developing emergency plans: “As emergency situations are usually not conducive to calm and clear thinking, having written plans allows for the opportunity to prepare and to prevent poor judgments made during an emergency.”

As we update our technical assistance and consultation manuals, the recommendations from the report, “A National Report Card on Protecting Children During Disasters: Is America Prepared to Protect Our Most Vulnerable Children in Emergencies?” will be included as consultation for home-based providers. When the new child care center rules become effective, the rules will require these plans.

cc: Child Care Licensing Consultants and Area Managers