

Tennessee Department of Human Services Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Plan

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I. BACKGROUND

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) licenses approximately 2,300 child care agencies across Tennessee with a capacity to serve an estimated 176,000 children. The National Commission on Children and Disasters recognized the need to improve emergency preparedness for children. In 2009, an interim report was released that recommended requiring disaster planning capabilities for child care providers. Trust for America's Health, a non-partisan public health policy, research and advocacy organization, identified a gap in their annual 2009 preparedness report, which found that Tennessee lacked a requirement that child care facilities (child care providers or agencies) have a multi-hazard written evacuation and relocation plan for emergencies. For example, Tennessee consistently ranked in the top ten in the nation in the number of reported tornados.

In 2009, TDHS Child Care Services launched an emergency preparedness initiative to develop a state plan. This initiative focused on gauging the level of emergency preparedness in rural and urban child care facilities, identified resource needs, and emergency preparedness policies.

The Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Plan (CCSEPP) was developed in 2013 in response to recommendations from the Office of Child Care (OCC) and Save the Children, and in conjunction with State efforts to enact emergency preparedness requirements for child care agencies ([Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-3-517](#)). The plan addresses the mandate set out by the OCC for Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) grantees to develop formal emergency planning, response, and recovery processes for early childhood care and education programs.

Requirements for development of a Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan were also included in the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Reauthorization of 2014. The CCDBG Reauthorization requires that the CCSEPP be developed in collaboration with specified entities, including the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education. Prior versions of the CCSEPP were updated in July 2016, June 2019, and February 2021.

II. PLAN SUMMARY

Plan Purposes

In the event of an emergency, the role of TDHS Child Care Services is to support child care agencies and assure the provision of safe and healthy child care and child care alternatives for families during and after a disaster or emergency. For purposes of the CCSEPP, use of the term 'agency' may refer to any center, family, or group home regulated by TDHS as well as providers of child care participating in the Child Care Payment Assistance/Child Care Certificate Program that may be license-exempt Boys and Girls Clubs, or regulated by the Department of Education, or unregulated Authorized Child Care Professionals. The CCSEPP provides specific actions that TDHS Child Care Services may take during emergency situations, including but not limited to the following:

- Facilitating reunification of displaced children with their families.

- Partnering and coordinating with state and local emergency management, law enforcement, fire, health, community resource agencies, emergency services, and others who may provide services or assistance to families and child care agencies.
- Assisting families needing immediate alternative child care.
- Providing assistance to impacted child care agencies.

This plan includes provisions for:

- Coordination and communication in the event of a disaster or emergency.
- Coordination for the relocation of children in affected TDHS licensed child care settings.
- Evaluation of Child Care Services and partner agencies abilities to function, assessment of child care agency needs, and assistance with coordination of temporary child care.
- Meeting requirements set forth in [Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-3-517](#) that all licensed child care agencies, excluding drop-in child care centers, shall develop written multi-hazard (or emergency preparedness) plans in consultation with local authorities and emergency management to protect children in the event of emergencies. Child care agencies are required to inform parents of their Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP).
- Meeting CCDF emergency preparedness requirements for other non-licensed or unregulated child care agencies that participate in the Child Care Payment Assistance/Child Care Certificate Program.

Emergency Preparedness

This CCSEPP is a living document and emphasizes safety, leadership, education, training, and public awareness through a comprehensive approach addressing emergency preparedness and disaster planning with licensed child care agencies.

This plan was developed in consultation with the Tennessee Young Child Wellness Council (TYCWC), our designated state advisory council on early childhood care and education, and the statewide Children in Disasters Task Force, whose members include Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA), Tennessee Department of Health (TDH), Tennessee Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R), and other public and nonprofit agencies and organizations.

This CCSEPP was also developed to further support child care agencies in taking steps to eliminate or reduce the impact of an emergency, develop the capacity to respond to disasters, and assist programs in returning to a normal state after a disaster has occurred. The plan addresses the following areas:

- Licensure rules and regulations that emphasize multi-hazard emergency preparedness planning, mitigation, response, and recovery;
- Provision of ongoing training and technical assistance to child care agencies that integrates working relationships with local emergency management agencies, public health officials, and others;

- Ensuring continuity of care through continuing child care services and child care assistance after an emergency/disaster;
- Encouraging and promoting local partnerships that incorporate the entire community in disaster planning; and
- Creating a website to make available disaster related and emergency preparedness resources, templates, sample forms, etc.

Child Care Services Disaster Function

The following activities may be carried out by Child Care Services during or after an emergency/disaster to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children receiving child care services:

- Communicating with partners, child care agencies, and families.
- Assisting with the relocation of children.
- Assessing the operational capacity of Child Care Services to fulfill its role and responsibilities and assuring the provision of continued core functions, i.e., monitoring health and safety standards, subsidized child care services, etc.
- Performing needs assessments of damaged and/or affected child care agencies.
- Facilitating the development of emergency child care services, including the development and implementation of temporary or special emergency response and recovery policies.
- Designating teams to carryout emergency preparedness functions.
- Ensuring emergency/disaster teams have access to this CCSEPP.

Disaster Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Timeline

The diagram below approximates the process for disaster functions that may be carried out by Child Care Services. **Disaster preparedness or mitigation** refers to actions that occur prior to a disaster. **Disaster response** refers to short-term actions that occur during, or immediately after a disaster. **Disaster recovery** refers to long-term actions that help to return the community to normal or near-normal conditions.



It should be noted that emergency/disaster functions may require additional staff, equipment, supplies, financial, or other resources. Whether or not Child Care Services carries out an individual emergency/disaster function depends on the specific needs at the time and availability of resources. The Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team will determine and manage which emergency/disaster activities or functions should be implemented.

III. Program Administration

Child Care Services developed this plan to support child care agencies and ensure families have access to safe and healthy alternative child care services for their children during and after emergencies/disasters. The plan includes objectives outlined in the CCDF State Plan, an overview of the Child Care Services organizational structure, and training requirements and expectations for staff and partners.

CCDF Plan Requirements

The CCDBG Act of 2014 added a requirement that States include a Statewide Child Care Disaster Plan for coordination of emergency child care activities between the State human services agency, State emergency management agency, State licensing agency, State health department, local and State child care resource and referral agencies, and the State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education that includes:

- Guidelines for continuing CCDF assistance and child care services after a disaster, which may include provision of temporary child care, and temporary operating standards for child care after a disaster.
- Requirements that child care agencies receiving CCDF have in place procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, and lock-down; communication and reunification with families; accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions; and maintaining continuity of operations.
- Requirements that child care agencies receiving CCDF have in place procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills.

Additional detail about CCDBG Plan requirements may be found at Title 45 of the *Code of Federal Regulations* Part 98 Child Care and Development Fund at [45 CFR § 98.16\(aa\)](#).

Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team Structure

Child Care Services will use a team structure to plan and assist child care agencies in the event of a disaster or an emergency. Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team has responsibility for providing oversight and managing specific emergency/disaster responses and will convene to discuss appropriate response(s). The team is composed of:

- Child Care Services Leadership Team
- TDHS Emergency Services Coordinator(s)
- Director of Operations, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Assistant Commissioner, Division of Child Care and Community Services

- Fiscal Services staff, as assigned
- Public Information and Legislative Office (PILO), as assigned.
- Office of General Counsel staff, as assigned
- Others as may be designated by the Commissioner.

Regular Review and Update of Disaster Plan

The CCSEPP will be reviewed triennially by the Child Care Services Leadership Team and approved by the Commissioner or Commissioner’s Designee. The plan and any revisions will be disseminated to all Child Care Services staff and internal and external partners as necessary.

Training of Child Care Services Staff and Partners

- Electronic and hard copies of this plan will be maintained and distributed to members of the Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team, Child Care Services staff, and leadership of select TDHS support divisions.
- New Child Care Services employees will receive information about this CCSEPP as part of their onboarding and/or New Employee Academy.
- Additional electronic resources may also be disseminated via cloud-based storage solutions, i.e., TDHS Intranet or SharePoint. All staff will update their contact information as required by the Department of Human Resources in Edison. Emergency-related team lists, including work and home contact information, will be further developed and maintained by CCS Central Office and reviewed and distributed annually at the direction of the Child Care Services Leadership Team.
- Periodic training for staff and/or partners with emergency preparedness/response roles will be coordinated with identified team members as needed. Staff and partners with such roles may receive additional training unique to their geographic area, e.g., responding to earthquakes in the New Madrid Seismic Zone in West Tennessee.

Specific Child Care Services Preparations for Storms and Major Disasters

- **Child Care Services and TDHS backup of computer systems.** Strategic Technology Solutions (STS) will work on behalf TDHS and Child Care Services to ensure routine backup processes are maintained to mitigate data loss and preserve continuity of operations.
- **Inventory of staff information.** Child Care Services may, as part of its disaster planning, ask staff to periodically volunteer information that may assist the Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team to develop solutions during emergencies/disasters. Examples may include identifying staff with foreign language skills, with medical or First Aid/CPR training, who are ham radio operators, who live near a county office, and other resources or skills that may be useful during an emergency.
- **Quick review of disaster roles and processes.** If TDHS is alerted to the possibility of an impending disaster, the Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team will alert staff to:
 - Review their disaster plans;
 - Have contact details for local/regional emergency management agencies and non-emergency alternatives to 911;
 - Identify steps they might take to respond to the incident; and

- Contact partners to collaboratively develop a coordinated response and work together to respond to the disaster.
- **Actions to prepare Child Care Services Staff.** Child Care Services will encourage staff to be proactive and take simple steps to reduce the risk of injury, (e.g., emergencies occurring when staff are in the office).
- **Communications to child care providers prior to disasters.**
 - Child Care Services will make publicly available information, materials, and resources that strengthen child care agency practices related to emergency preparedness, safe responses to disasters, and emergency contacts. Included among these materials will be *Preparing Child Care Programs for Emergencies “A Six Step Approach”* self-assessment handbook and checklist.
 - Child Care Services will rely on the TDHS Public Information and Legislative Office (PILO) to maintain information at the TDHS website and TDHS Intranet. Child Care Services will also leverage the communications networks for its partners to further share information and best practices.
 - Child Care Services will provide technical assistance and training referrals to partners during routine visits to TDHS licensed child care agencies. Child Care Services may also share resources to increase awareness and understanding among child care agencies, including HS-3275 Child Care Agency Emergency Preparedness Plan Checklist and Template.
 - Child Care Services will assist with the facilitation of ongoing and local opportunities through the Children in Disaster State Task Force for child care agencies to perform a self-assessment of their agency Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRPs) in consultation with local subject matter experts, i.e., emergency managers, law enforcement, health educators, etc., using the revised *Preparing Child Care Programs for Emergencies “A Six Step Approach”*.

IV. Command and Control

Disaster Response Process

- The disaster response will be initiated by the Commissioner.
- Consideration for a disaster response:
 - Declaration of state of emergency by the President of the United States, Governor of Tennessee, or other leader(s);
 - Activation of State Emergency Response Team/State Emergency Operations Center;
 - Need for action by Child Care Services:
 - Because disasters may require immediate action, the Commissioner or the designee of the Commissioner has full authority to activate disaster functions and temporarily reassign staff as needed to carry out response functions.

Management Structure

A team structure will be utilized to plan and oversee any disaster response. Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team will provide oversight and manage specific response tasks. Regional disaster teams may also be designated to implement local responses.

- **Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team** may make decisions regarding strategies, policies, and resources. Examples of such decisions may include but are not limited to:
 - activation of disaster response or development of new responses/policies as required for a specific emergency;
 - development of requests for emergency resources (funding/personnel/equipment); and
 - temporary reassignment of staff as needed.
- **Regional Teams** may be used to facilitate local communication and collaboration among Child Care Services partners at the regional level, including public health officials, emergency management staff, and other such partners as may be identified.

Broader Disaster Response

- TDHS collaborates with other agencies, such as the Tennessee Department of General Services, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA), and others on disaster response activities during and in the immediate aftermath of a disaster to ensure activities of the agency continue with minimal disruption.
- The Child Care Services Director and Director of Operations, or their designee(s), will participate in any statewide emergency planning processes as may be designated by the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, or Assistant Commissioner of Child Care and Community Services to make strategic decisions about coordination with other agencies in the event of a disaster.

V. Disaster Functions

Child Care Services may undertake the following disaster functions in order to fulfill the TDHS's role supporting child care agencies and providing families with safe and healthy alternatives for child care during and after a disaster or emergency.

Communications

Facilitate reliable and frequent communication among partner agencies to improve collaboration and avoid duplication. Ensure that child care agencies, the general public, and partners are aware of Child Care Services and other agencies' assistance.

Overall Child Care Services responsibilities:

- Assist with the development and dissemination of emergency preparedness, response, and recovery information, including information to child care agencies in areas affected by disaster.
- Assist with the development and dissemination of information about emergency child care and other types of services or assistance to families in affected area.

- Collect and share information on response/recovery efforts with Child Care Services partners by acting as a central clearinghouse to reduce the chance of duplication.

Child Care Services Partners Who May Be Enlisted to Assist with Communications

- Tennessee Child Care Resource & Referral Network (CCR&R)
- Tennessee Early Childhood Training Alliance (TECTA)
- Association of Infant Mental Health in Tennessee (AIMHITN)
- University of Tennessee Social Work Office of Research and Public Service (UT SWORPS)
- ChildcareTennessee, an initiative of The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee
- Internal TDHS partners, i.e., Public Information and Legislative Office (PILO)
- State, regional, and local health departments, including TDH Emergency Response Coordinators
- TEMA and TDHS Emergency Services Coordinators
- Local child care agencies in affected areas
- Local community and/or social services agencies and providers in affected areas

Preparedness and Pre-Disaster Communications

- Child care agencies may receive a copy of *Preparing Child Care Programs for Emergencies “A Six Step Approach”* handbook as an instruction and self-assessment guide that provide steps for developing an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP). This information will be available at the TDHS website and through other partner resources.
- Annual training may be required or made available to staff of Child Care Services.
- Changes in rules and regulations on emergency preparedness will require in-service training with Child Care Services staff to assure consistency and understanding of updated changes.
- Child Care Services will employ checklists and other tools to monitor an agency’s emergency preparedness and response plan (EPRP) for compliance. Technical assistance will be available from CCDF Quality Child Care Partners.
- Identify critical Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team members and coordinate with the TDHS Emergency Service Coordinator(s) to obtain FirstNet cellular phones (currently available through Department of Safety) to provide priority phone service during times of emergency.

Disaster Response Communications

- Child Care Services Director, his/her designee, and team may activate disaster communications with TDHS PILO to disseminate information as may be appropriate and in cooperation with other such partners as may be required.
- The Child Care Services Director will lead the preparation and review of all such communications as press releases, disaster updates, and other such written communications regarding a disaster in consultation with the TDHS PILO and TDHS Executive Leadership.
- Should children need relocation from child care agencies facing potential dangers, Child Care Services staff, emergency management personnel, and public health officials will be responsible for obtaining information about relocation efforts and assist as may be needed or upon request.

- Pertinent information and updates will be posted to the TDHS website and disseminated to partners and child care agencies when appropriate and practical.
- Regional/Program Managers will collect and share general information between the local, regional, and state levels where possible.
- Child Care Services staff will work closely with state and local partners to disseminate information to child care agencies and families regarding local relief/recovery efforts.
- Child Care Services will work with local departments of social services, state, regional, and local health agencies, emergency management personnel, and other partners to determine what information related to their disaster efforts should be disseminated to providers.

Relocation of Children Off-Site

“Relocation” (also known as “off-site evacuation”) refers to the movement of children away from regulated child care agencies to a safer location during an emergency. [Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-3-517](#) requires the multi-hazard plan contain:

- Procedures for notification of parents of emergency;
- Designated relocation sites and evacuation routes to those sites;
- A reunification plan for children and families; and
- Plans to accommodate children with special needs in an emergency situation.

Child care agencies are required to have a plan for relocating children as part of their emergency procedures. The law requires that providers designate in advance the site where children would be relocated and notify parents of this relocation site. Providers are expected to follow instructions from local authorities during mandatory evacuations regarding when to relocate children. Plans must include provisions for safely transporting children to the relocation site. The role of Child Care Services in cases of relocation will be to serve as a central point of contact to:

- Ensure that emergency personnel involved with evacuation/relocation have sufficient location information for all child care agencies in the affected area(s).
- Ensure that all child care agencies in the area are aware of any impending evacuations.
- Inform agencies, as needed, of designated relocation sites.
- Assist agencies, as needed, in locating transportation to relocate children.
- Obtain information, as needed, as to where evacuating providers are relocating and when they leave (to relay to parents or emergency personnel as needed).
- Remind providers who are relocating children of safe transportation procedures so that there is the safe accounting for every child.
- Inform local social service agencies and/or local child care resource and referral agencies of providers who are relocating and whether they need assistance.
- Enlist local social service agencies and/or local child care resource and referral agencies in contacting providers or parents as needed, or in helping to transport children as needed.

Partners Outside Child Care Services to Help with Functions

- Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA)
- TDHS Emergency Services Coordinator(s)
- Child Care Services CCDF Quality Child Care Partners
- Local partnerships and/or child care resource and referral agencies
- State, regional, and local health department officials, including TDH Emergency Response Coordinators
- Other organization as may be determined by TDHS.

Before a Disaster

- Child Care Services staff will determine what information other partners may need in advance of a disaster, e.g., lists of child care agencies in their areas, estimates of the number of children/adults at each facility, contact information, etc. This may include a designated staff member communicating between Child Care Services and a TEMA Reunification Task Force.
- Child Care Services staff will obtain a list of locations designated by local authorities in advance as possible relocation/evacuation sites where affected children in child care facilities could be taken. This list may be shared with child care agencies.

During Disaster – Steps to Implement a Special Response

- Child Care Services will facilitate the evacuation of child care agencies as needed. The Child Care Services team will determine which role(s) it may play in offering guidance to agencies or giving information to families during relocation.
- Child care agencies in the threatened area(s) may be alerted about potential relocation. Child Care Services staff may contact state or local emergency personnel to ensure that emergency managers have the latest information on the location of child care agencies and find out where emergency managers are directing facilities to relocate. Child Care Services and partners may also assist child care agencies in locating transportation as needed.
- To the extent possible, Child Care Services staff or partners may work with child care agencies throughout the relocation to coordinate reunification of parents with children who were evacuated. Information may be made available to families as quickly as practicable and where possible concerning the location of a child(ren) and how/when families might be reunited. Strict procedures must be followed to make certain children are released only to adults who have been authorized by each child's parent/guardian and that the names and contact information of these authorized persons is available at the relocation and reunification sites.
- Depending on the nature of the relocation, Child Care Services staff may work with the Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, Association of Infant Mental Health in Tennessee (AIMHITN), or other CCDF Quality Child Care Partners to facilitate the availability of mental health services to children, families, and child care agencies that experience trauma. Such services may also include psychological first aid as may be needed especially at relocation/reunification sites or during recovery upon return to the child care setting.

Assessment of Child Care Services/Partner Agency Functionality

Determine how Child Care Services and/or key partners' ability to function has been affected by the emergency. Determine how Child Care Services staff, equipment, and offices may have been affected by the emergency in order to develop appropriate Department responses. Consider polling key early childhood care and education partners about their functionality to be able to develop appropriate disaster response activities.

Before a Disaster

The Child Care Services Director (and/or their designee) will clarify with team members which roles they may be likely to assume in assessing child care services/key partner functionality.

Following Disaster—Steps to Implement Special Response

As soon as possible after the disaster:

- If the Nashville area were impacted by the emergency, the Child Care Services Director will identify any impacts on Central Office-based staff as well as communications/IT infrastructure, i.e., computer/phone systems, to determine what resources may be needed to address negative impacts. Child Care Services Central Office-based staff will utilize Alternate Workplace Solutions (AWS) or preidentified alternate sites as required.
- Child Care Services staff will activate phone trees to determine how their field staff have been affected, what resources would be needed to enable the field staff to resume operations, and any information the field staff know about the status of partners in their areas.
- At the direction of the Child Care Services Director, the Child Care Certificate Program management team will develop such emergency preparedness plans for continuation of services as may be necessary.
- Should the Central Office be so severely impacted that Nashville-based staff are unable to assume leadership roles in the immediate aftermath of an emergency, a Regional or Program Manager may temporarily play primary leadership roles for Child Care Services until Central Office staff become available to reassume responsibilities. The Regional/Program Manager will coordinate with the team members and the other regional team leaders to carry out the assessment of Child Care Services functionality and the status of staff.
- Assessments of need should be repeated periodically until TDHS and key partners have returned to normal operations. Throughout the process, information generated from the assessments of need will be communicated to the TDHS Emergency Services Coordinator and TDHS Executive Leadership Emergency Preparedness Team members and be used to revise the response as necessary.

Assessment of Child Care Providers' Damages and Needs

Identify child care facilities affected by the disaster/the extent of the damage.

Functional Team Members

- Child Care Services field management (regional/program managers and field supervisors)
- Child Care Certificate Program staff

- Central office staff to assist with the needs assessment and consolidating data for emergency preparedness team’s use
- TDHS Emergency Services Coordinator(s)

Before a Disaster

Team Leader will clarify which roles team members may be likely to assume in assessing the needs/damages of child care agencies.

Following Disaster—Steps to Implement Special Response

- Child Care Services Director decides to activate the needs assessment function and determines whether, given the disaster scenario, field or central office staff should take the lead.
- If Child Care Services field staff is given the lead role:
 - They will gather requested information on the status of child care providers in their area.
 - Information collected will be compiled by field management and forwarded directly to the Child Care Services Director who will establish information reporting frequencies.
- Assessments of need should be repeated periodically until child care agencies have resumed normal operations. Throughout the process, information generated from these assessments of need will be communicated to team members and used to continually revise the response as necessary.

Facilitation of Temporary or Emergency Child Care

The Disaster Response Team should work with partners to ensure that healthy and safe child care arrangements are accessible to meet the needs of children and parents.

For purposes of this plan, “temporary or emergency child care” is defined as organized supervision of unrelated children that may ordinarily be subject to child care licensure, but due to the severity of a disaster, may be allowed to operate without a license for a limited amount of time. Temporary or emergency child care arrangements would be allowed to protect the health and safety of children, as well as promote families’ efforts to recover from the disaster.

Functional Team Members

- Child Care Licensing staff
- Child Care Certificate Program staff
- Fiscal Services staff
- Office of General Counsel staff

Partners Outside Child Care Services to Help with Function

- Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) and other CCDF Quality Child Care Partners
- Head Start Association/Migrant Head Start
- Red Cross chapters Red Cross offices in disaster-affected areas
- FEMA and (after first phase of emergency management) state Division of Emergency Management site coordinators for temporary housing sites
- Local Emergency Management coordinators

- Other organization as may be determined by TDHS.

As a special emergency preparedness activity, the team works with the partners listed above to make them aware of examples of conditions under which temporary or emergency child care may be allowed and encouraged:

- Existing licensed child care providers that are temporarily or permanently unable to continue providing services (i.e., overall supply of child care in the community is no longer sufficient as determined through the needs assessment/other sources);
- Families needing child care while they are seeking disaster assistance or living in temporary housing/shelters so they may focus on recovering from the disaster and their children may receive special attention; and /or
- Emergency workers with young children who need child care to be able to report for duty.

Following Disaster – Steps to Implement Special Response

- Child Care Services Director and the identified functional team decides whether temporary child care arrangements are needed to supplement existing capacity or make child care more easily accessible to families affected by the disaster or assisting with the relief effort. If temporary child care arrangements are needed, the Director determines the appropriate scope of Child Care Services involvement.
- Using information gathered with the help of Child Care Services representatives or partners, the Director works with Subsidy Services, Regulatory Services, Office of General Counsel, and others as needed to determine what kind of temporary child care arrangements may be allowed and encouraged. Examples may include:
 - On-site child care arrangements set up at work locations as utility offices, police departments, hospitals, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), or Small Business Administration (SBA) for the children of disaster critical or relief employees who must work during or just after disasters, when licensed child care facilities may still be closed.
 - Child care in emergency shelters if shelters are expected to be open for an extended amount of time.
 - Child care offered at temporary housing sites if no existing child care providers in the area can accommodate extra demand (or if transportation obstacles prevent access)
 - Use of child care arrangements that are license-exempt and would not normally serve children receiving subsidy services.
 - Other arrangements as may be needed to address circumstances where the overall supply of child care in the community is no longer sufficient.
- The Assistant Commissioner of Child Care and Community Services, Deputy Commissioner, Commissioner, and/or the Commissioner’s designee(s) will determine whether funds may be made available to help local partners finance temporary care arrangements.
- Temporary child care providers may be approved for a period to be determined by the Department. Child Care Services staff will assist in any regulatory matters and consider the

enrollment of new or temporary providers into the Child Care Certificate Program or the temporary expansion of capacity of current subsidized child care providers.

- Child Care Services will maintain a limited role in the development of temporary child care, serving primarily to facilitate the process and to communicate with partners about child care needs and resources. Once local partners are in communication with each other and understand their parameters and possible resources are, Child Care Services' involvement may only need to be periodic communication to learn about the outcomes of temporary child care.

Special Licensing Policies and Reestablishment of Safe/Healthy Care

Provide flexibility for child care agencies meeting basic health and safety standards to reopen or expand capacity.

Functional Team Members:

- Child Care Services Leadership Team
- Director of Operations, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Assistant Commissioner, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- District Child Care Licensing staff, as needed
- Office of General Counsel staff, as needed

Partners Outside Child Care Services to Help with Function

- Local building, fire, and/or environmental health inspectors
- Local Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

Following Disaster – Steps to Implement Special Response

- Child Care Services, in consultation with the Office of General Counsel and the TDHS Executive Leadership Team, will work with child care agencies impacted to determine what, if any, regulations may need to be modified or relaxed during or following an emergency/disaster to facilitate the reestablishment of care in compliance with the CCDF State Plan and subject to approval by OCC.
- Child Care Services will provide technical assistance to licensed child care agencies that sustain damage to determine whether they can continue operating, must temporarily close/reduce enrollment, or relocate. If an agency decides to relocate, licensing staff will assist the agency to reestablish licensed care on a temporary basis in the new location.
- If the local child care supply is impacted by a disaster and it is necessary to expand capacity, Child Care Services will provide or make referrals for technical assistance to any of the largely unaffected providers who are willing to provide care for additional children.
- CCDF Quality Child Care Partners may be asked to assist in communications with providers and emergency management about efforts to reestablish care.

Continuing the Reimbursement for Subsidized Child Care

Ensure that child care providers who offer subsidized child care are reimbursed as quickly as possible.

Functional Team Members

- Child Care Certificate Program Director
- Child Care Services Director
- Director of Operations, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Assistant Commissioner, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Chief Financial Officer
- Deputy Commissioner
- Commissioner/Designee(s)

Partners Outside Child Care Services to Help with Function

- Office of the State Comptroller (indirectly, through backup of payment processing capabilities)
- Department of Finance and Administration

Steps to Reestablish Function

- The disaster function team leader calls together the team to determine the extent and estimated duration of the impact on continuation of payment for subsidized care.
- If the Child Care Certificate Program Subsidized Child Care Reimbursement System is down throughout the state and it is not anticipated that the system can be reestablished within two (2) weeks, the disaster function team identifies procedures for counties to follow in the interim. The Child Care Certificate Program Director should contact the appropriate office(s) to make them aware of new or alternate procedures. Should phone, fax, or email communications be disrupted, Child Care Certificate Program staff will make contact on-site if travel is possible.
- If normal operations are interrupted, the following efforts may be used to facilitate the continuation of payments:
 - Issue payment identical to previous payment and then adjustment would be made with next payment.
 - Payments would be made via Edison (server is out of state), or Department of Finance and Administration could allow for paper checks to be issued.
- Enrollments may be taken via state temporary disaster centers and/or at child care agencies that are open. Applications may be processed manually. Temporary approvals may be made if documents are unavailable due to disaster situation.

Child Care Subsidy Application Emergency Procedures

Implement procedures to process new applications for families needing assistance as a result of the emergency.

Functional Team Members

- Child Care Certificate Program Director
- Child Care Services Director
- Director of Operations, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Assistant Commissioner, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Chief Financial Officer

- Deputy Commissioner
- Commissioner/Designee(s)

Partners Outside Child Care Services to Help with Function

- Identified by the appropriate authority by the Department Executive Leadership Team.

Following Disaster – Steps to Implement Special Response

- Based on information provided by Child Care Services staff, partners, or statewide disaster reports, the Child Care Services Director or his/her designee determines that emergency child care procedures are needed. The Budget Director may be required to verify availability of state funding for emergency child care.
- After confirming that funding exists and obtaining all necessary permissions or authorizations to activate emergency child care procedures, the Child Care Services Director will notify field staff.
- Child Care Services staff will develop a plan to receive and process requests for assistance under the Direction of the Child Care Services Director, using whatever methods are available such as online, by phone, or in-person. Enrollments may be taken via state temporary disaster centers and/or at open child care programs. Application may be processed manually. Temporary approvals may be made if documents are unavailable due to disaster situation.
- Child Care Services staff may as needed be reassigned or moved to another location.

Other Assistance

Respond to needs unique to a disaster scenario. The Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team may take on other functions in order to meet the needs of children, families, and child care agencies affected by a disaster.

VI. Child Care Agency Plans (Scope and Components)

CCDF Requirements for Child Care Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans are outlined for TDHS licensed child care agencies and other child care agencies eligible to participate in the Child Care Payment Assistance/Certificate Program to meet expectations for protecting the health, safety, and well-being of the children in care during emergencies or natural disasters. [Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-3-517](#) requires all licensed agencies, excluding drop-in child care centers, to develop a written multi-hazard plan in consultation with appropriate local authorities and local emergency management to protect children in the event of emergencies. Child Care Agency Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans (EPRPs) must include procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, and lock-down; communication and reunification with families; accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions; and maintaining continuity of operations. Each Child Care Agency Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) must also include procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills.

The Child Care Services Emergency Preparedness Team may take on other functions to meet the needs of children, families, and child care providers affected by a disaster.

Plan Development

The child care agency shall develop a written multi-hazard plan that addresses the following:

1. Procedures for Notification of Parents in an Emergency

- Child care agencies shall maintain information on each child enrolled in a format that is easily transported during evacuation of the facility. Recommended information may include:
 - name of child
 - name of parent(s) or legal guardian and emergency contact
 - home address
 - home/mobile phone number
 - place of employment of each parent and emergency contact
 - work (or emergency) phone number of each parent and emergency contact
 - medical information such as allergies, special needs of child, medication required by child, etc.
 - name and phone number of child's health care provider
 - profile of child that includes personal information about the child's likes, needs, etc.
- Child care agencies should identify someone responsible for ensuring that emergency contact information is evacuated with the children.
- Child care agencies shall notify parents through direct contact such as phone communication or through news media.
- The following information shall be provided:
 - Nature of emergency (what, when, where, how, why)
 - General condition of children
 - Present location of children
 - Relocation site (if necessary)
 - Where and how children can be picked up by parents or by the persons designated on their emergency form

2. Designated Relocation Sites and Evacuation Routes

- Child care agencies shall have prearranged relocation sites.
- Parents shall be notified in advance of probable relocation sites.
- A plan for posting the location where children have been taken shall be maintained.
- A message should be posted on the door of the facility describing where their children have been taken.
- This posting shall include route and method of transportation (and mobile phone number for staff accompanying the children).
- Contact information for all drivers should be included in the emergency call-up roster.
- As children are evacuated, they shall be taken to the transportation pick-up area and evacuated quickly and safely to a previously arranged site.

- Alternative transportation arrangements should be made if the agency does not normally provide transportation.
- Child care agencies shall be knowledgeable of their neighborhood in the event an evacuation on foot is required.

3. Reunification Plans for Children and Families

- Child care agency staff must remain with the children until they can be released to their parents or guardians.
- Child care agencies shall designate a safe area to which parents can be directed to sign their children out.
- Child care agencies shall be alert to the possibility that individuals sometimes use the chaotic environments during an emergency to abduct children and take precautions to ensure that children are only released to authorized individuals.
- When a parent/guardian/authorized representative is not available resulting in children that are transported for emergency medical treatment they shall be accompanied by a caregiver whenever possible.
- A message should be posted on the door of the facility describing where their children have been relocated.
- Once children have been safely evacuated, the director or designated person shall contact local media and provide the following:
 - Nature of emergency (what, when, where, how, why)
 - General condition of children
 - Present location of children
 - Relocation site (if necessary)
 - Where and how children can be picked up by parents or by the persons designated on their emergency form
- Children evacuated to a site managed by the American Red Cross shall be registered at intake.
- Child care agency staff shall stay with children until all have been safely released to their parents, guardians, or authorized individuals.
- If a child is taken for medical treatment, a child care agency staff member shall accompany the child and remain with the child until a parent or designated person arrives to assume responsibility. In the case of one caregiver for multiple children, the caregiver may have to acquire assistance.

4. Written Individualized Plans for Accommodating a Child's Special Needs in an Emergency Situation

- Child care agencies shall maintain current individualized plans for each child with special needs.
- Individualized plans for children with special needs shall include areas such as:
 - Evacuation plans for children with mobility, hearing, visual, and emotional impairments, etc.
 - Transporting children with special needs

- Medication/specialized medical equipment
- Emotional needs
- Identification of staff assigned to children with special needs.
- Suitable evacuation sites that may accommodate children with special needs.

In consultation with TDHS Child Care Licensing and local emergency personnel, management at each child care agency has responsibility for developing and implementing an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) specific to their agency.

Child care agency management may rely on other key personnel to perform tasks to ensure the safety of children and staff during a crisis or critical incident. Each staff member must be familiar with his or her role and responsibilities before an incident occurs through regular disaster planning and training as required by Child Care Licensing Rules.

Specific Disaster Planning

Emergency preparedness and response planning for emergencies resulting from a natural disaster, or a man-caused event (such as violence at a child care facility), within the meaning of those terms under section 602(a)(1) of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief And Emergency Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 5195a(a)(1)) shall include procedures:

- Evacuation**
- Relocation**
- Shelter-in-place and lock down,**
- Staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills**
- Communication and reunification with families**
- Continuity of operations**
- Accommodation of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.**

The Tennessee Emergency Management Agency (TEMA) also recommends that the agency multi-hazard plan also include specific provisions for protecting children in the event of emergencies that include, but are not limited to the following hazards: Communicable Disease, Dam/Levee Failure, Drought, Earthquake, Extreme Temperature, Flood, Geologic, Hazardous Materials Release, Infrastructure Incidents, Severe Weather, Terrorism, Tornado, and Wildfire.

Fire Hazard

Fires can happen at any time in a child care agency. Usually, it's not the fire itself that causes the most injury and harm, it is the smoke. However, the agency can take steps to avoid or reduce damage, injuries, or loss of life:

- Inspect the building to determine if it can be made more fire-proof.
- Include fire preparedness in emergency plans and practice fire drills.
- Teach children and staff what to do if a fire occurs.

Possible Response Procedures:

- Evacuation
- Relocation
- Parent-Child Reunification

Facility Response Actions:

- Contact Fire Department
- Notify local law enforcement
- Determine if evacuation is required
- Ensure that all children have been evacuated
- Disseminate information about the incident such as relocation site and parent-child reunification procedures
- Notify relocation site and determine an alternate site if needed
- Take roster and emergency kits, if time allows
- Agency staff should remain with children throughout the evacuation process
- Upon arrival to a safe area away from fire, attendance should be taken
- Missing children should be immediately reported to local law enforcement
- Injured children should be reported using the [Tennessee Provider Portal](#) located at the TDHS website
- Deploy accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

Buildings should not be reoccupied until it has been inspected and determined safe by proper authorities.

Severe Thunderstorms/Tornadoes

Severe thunderstorms are common occurrences throughout the state. Storms often include dangerous winds and unstable conditions that may sometimes produce tornados. Advance notice of approaching storms is critical to protect children and staff. Devices such as telephones, mobile phones, radios, weather radios, and tone-activated receivers can provide advance warning of dangerous conditions.

Possible Response Procedures

- Children may need to crouch and protect their heads and neck
- Reverse Evacuation
- Shelter-in-Place
- Evacuation
- Parent-Child Reunification

Facility Response Actions:

- Staff should be alerted without alarming children.
- If children are outside they should immediately be moved inside.

- Children should be moved away from windows.
- Children should be moved away from water and appliances and kept off phones, during lightning.
- Children and staff should be moved to identified safe locations (basements, center of structure on lowest floor, small room such as a closet or bathroom, or under sturdy furniture). In large buildings, go to an interior hallway on the lowest floor, or to a designated shelter area (stay out of auditoriums, gymnasiums, and other structures with wide, free-span roofs).
- Warning devices should be monitored for additional information.
- Staff should remain with children throughout the shelter-in-place process.
- Missing children should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.
- Injured children should be reported using the [Tennessee Provider Portal](#) located at the TDHS website.
- If necessary, children should be evacuated to a safer location.
- The relocation site should be notified and an alternate relocation site determined, if necessary.
- Staff and children should not be allowed to return to the building until proper authorities have determined that it is safe to do so.
- Information about the incident such as the relocation site and parent-child reunification procedures should be disseminated.
- Deploy accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

Earthquake

Earthquakes can happen in many areas in and around Tennessee. The New Madrid Seismic Zone could potentially be the most dangerous of natural hazards that could impact the state. Steps may be taken to reduce or avoid damage, injuries, or loss of life; and children and staff can be taught what to do in an earthquake.

Possible Response Procedures:

- Children may need to Drop, Cover, and Hold
- Shelter-in-Place
- Evacuation
- Parent-Child Reunification
- Relocation

Facility Response Actions:

- Determine what procedures should be activated.
- Determine if evacuation is required.
- Building maintenance should check mechanical ventilating systems.
- Local law enforcement should be notified of intent to shelter in place.
- Radio and Internet should be monitored for additional information and developments.
- The relocation site should be notified, and an alternate site determined if necessary.

- Children and staff should be moved away from immediate danger.
- If outside, observe flags or buildings for evidence of aftershock. Relocate children if necessary.
- Shelter-in-place procedures should be enacted when needed.
- Missing children should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.
- Injured children should be reported using the [Tennessee Provider Portal](#) located at the TDHS website.
- Children and staff should remain in sheltered area until the “all clear” signal has been issued.
- Local law enforcement should be notified of any alternate relocation site.
- Information about relocation site and parent-child reunification procedures should be disseminated.
- Evacuation and relocation procedures should be enacted if a natural or propane gas leak or odor is detected.
- During evacuation, all children should be directed to report to assigned evacuation area. Class roster and emergency kits should be taken. Building should be checked to ensure that all children have been evacuated.
- When evacuation site is reached, attendance should be taken.
- Buildings should not be reentered until emergency response personnel have determined it is safe.
- Deploy accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

Hazardous Materials (Chemical Spills)

Hazardous materials accidents may originate inside or outside the building and are regularly transported on highway or rail systems. In addition, materials such as ammonia, chlorine, and propane could be used and stored in the facility. Toxic leaks or spills can result from accidents involving storage or transport. The child care agency should inspect any stored chemicals on a regular basis.

Possible Response Procedures for External Hazardous materials spill:

- Reverse Evacuation
- Shelter-in-Place
- Evacuation
- Family-Child Reunification

Possible Response Procedures for Internal Hazardous materials spill:

- Evacuation
- Relocation
- Family-Child Reunification

Facility Response Actions for an External Spill:

- Children should be moved away from immediate danger.

- If children are outside a reverse evacuation procedure should be considered (observe wind direction by observing flags or leaves and move children appropriately).
- Mechanical ventilating systems should be shut off.
- Local law enforcement should be notified of intent to shelter in place.
- Missing children should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.
- Injured children should be reported using the [Tennessee Provider Portal](#) located at the TDHS website.
- Evacuation to a safer location should be considered.
- The relocation site should be notified, and an alternate site determined if necessary.
- Staff and children should not be allowed to return to the building until proper authorities have determined that it is safe to do so.
- Radio and Internet should be monitored for additional information.
- Information about relocation site and parent-child reunification procedures should be disseminated.
- Deploy accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

Facility Response Actions for an Internal Spill:

- Persons discovering the spill should:
 - Alert others in the immediate area to leave the area
 - Close windows and doors and restrict access to affected area
 - Do not eat or drink anything or apply cosmetics.
- Staff and children should be moved away from the immediate danger zone.
- Evacuation procedures should be activated using primary or alternate routes, avoiding exposure to the chemical fumes.
- An all-site evacuation should be considered.
- Mechanical ventilating systems should be shut off.
- The local fire department and the Tennessee Department of Health should be notified with the following information:
 - Site name and address, including nearest cross street(s).
 - Location of the spill and/or materials released; name of substance, if known.
 - Characteristics of spill (color, smell, visible gases).
 - Injuries, if any.
- Local law enforcement should be notified of intent to evacuate.
- Missing children should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.
- Injured children should be reported using the [Tennessee Provider Portal](#) located at the TDHS website.
- Information about relocation site and parent-child reunification procedures should be disseminated.
- The relocation site should be notified, and an alternate relocation site determined, if necessary.

- If a natural or propane gas leak or odor is detected, the building should be evacuated immediately.
- During evacuation, all children should be directed to report to assigned evacuation area. Class roster and emergency kits should be taken. Building should be checked to ensure that all children have been evacuated.
- When evacuation site is reached, attendance should be taken.
- Buildings should not be reentered until emergency response personnel have determined it is safe.
- Deploy accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

Floods

Flooding can occur in most regions of Tennessee from a wide variety of causes. Communities that have a designated warning system will alert staff and families in case of imminent or confirmed flooding.

Possible Response Procedures:

- Evacuation
- Reverse Evacuation
- Relocation
- Family-Child Reunification

Facility Response Actions:

- Determine if evacuation is required.
- Local law enforcement should be notified of intent to evacuate, the location of the safe evacuation site, and the route to be taken to that site.
- Building should be checked to ensure that all children and staff have been evacuated.
- Radio and Internet should be monitored for flood information.
- Information about the incident, relocation site, and parent-child reunification procedures should be disseminated.
- The relocation site should be notified, and an alternate relocation site determined, if necessary.
- The class roster, emergency contact information, and emergency kits should be taken.
- Attendance should be taken before leaving the site.
- Missing children should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.
- Injured children should be reported using the [Tennessee Provider Portal](#) located at the TDHS website.
- When evacuation site is reached, attendance should be taken.
- Buildings should not be reentered until emergency response personnel have determined it is safe.
- Deploy accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

Law Enforcement Emergencies

Possible events under this item may include child abduction, riots, protests, strikes, shots fired/active shooter, crimes, domestic violence, terrorist attack, etc. Some of these situations may require lock-down of the facility.

Possible Response Procedures:

- Reverse Evacuation
- Shelter-in-Place
- Lock-down
- Evacuation
- Parent-Child Reunification

Facility Response Actions:

- Law enforcement should be notified by dialing 911.
- A code that can be paged to alert workers in other parts of the building so workers will recognize to keep children out of harm's way should be established. Alternatively, a method to *discretely* notify all workers of emergencies could be established.
- The incident should be isolated if it is safely possible to do so.
- Children should be moved to a safe location.
- If relocation is necessary, proceed with caution when leaving agency and entering streets. A police escort may be advised.
- Missing children should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.
- Injured children should be reported using the [Tennessee Provider Portal](#) located at the TDHS website.
- Deploy accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions.

Training and Drills

Child Care agencies shall maintain documentation that staff are trained on the multi-hazard plan annually. The agency shall implement these emergency procedures through timely practice drills to meet local regulations and local emergency plans. Drills shall simulate conditions of a real emergency. To aid child care agencies, resources and relevant online training is available from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA; www.fema.gov or www.ready.gov), including:

- ICS 100 -Introduction to the Incident Command System
- IS-700 – National Incident Management System
- IS 240 – Leadership & Influence
- IS 907 – Active Shooter

Plan Monitoring and Evaluation

Child Care agencies are required by law to monitor and evaluate their respective plans on an annual basis. Maintaining the plan and providing frequent opportunities for review and evaluation can improve readiness to respond to incidents. Child care agencies are encouraged to stay in regular contact with the local, state, and local emergency managers, such as fire, law enforcement, Red Cross, Tennessee Department of Safety, and Tennessee Department of Health officials to be aware of the general community emergency preparedness plans and training.

VII. Child Care Emergency Preparedness Teams

The **TDHS Executive Leadership Team** oversees the Department’s response, maintains communication with the Governor’s Office, and implements any special response initiatives via the Child Care Services Leadership Team.

The **Child Care Services Leadership Team** manages emergency preparedness communications between the Executive Team, Central Office staff, and field staff. The Child Care Services Leadership Team also manages the coordination of emergency responses across Child Care Services. This team may include:

- Assistant Commissioner of Child Care and Community Services
- Director of Operations, Division of Child Care and Community Services
- Director of Child Care Services
- Director of Child and Adult Care Licensing
- Director of Field Operations, Child and Adult Care Licensing
- Director of Pre-Licensure, Child and Adult Care Licensing
- Director of Child Care Certificate Program
- Director of Program Reliability and Compliance
- Director of Compliance
- Others as may be identified

VIII. References and Resources

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[Youth and Emergency Planning](#), Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.