



Emergency Preparedness for Children with Special Needs

Adapted from Seattle Children's Center for Children with Special Needs:

<http://cshcn.org/planning-record-keeping/emergency-preparedness-children-special-needs>

Preparing for an emergency is difficult for any parent, and as a parent caring for a child with special needs, you have extra things to think about. Try to reflect on your child's needs if there was:

- *No water, electricity, telephone, heat, air conditioning, or refrigeration.
- *No local access to prescription refills or health products.
- *Separation from family members.
- *Confinement to home or evacuation to a shelter or elsewhere.
- *Limited health care access and emergency rescue services.
- *A lack of transportation.

Here are a few tools to help you be prepared, in case of an emergency:

We wish to thank the Washington Family to Family Health Information Center and the American Red Cross-Seattle Chapter for assistance with this information.

Create an Emergency Plan

The first step to creating an emergency plan is to sit down and talk with your family about different types of emergencies, how to prepare for them, and brainstorm ideas of how to care for your child with special needs during an emergency.

You should also discuss how to care for your child during different types of emergencies with your child's doctor or health care team. Be sure to develop a plan for how you will communicate with your child's care team during an emergency. Learn about emergency plans at your child's school or child care center. Learn their plans for shelter-in-place emergencies and how your child will get treatment, medications etc. Be sure to get their emergency contact numbers.



Ways to plan

- * 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: find out the facility's plans for emergencies and how your child will get treatment, medications, etc. Get their emergency contact numbers.
- * Create and practice an escape plan for your home: be sure there are clear exit paths for a child who uses mobility devices or has vision loss and keep a pair of shoes stored under the bed of each family member in case of 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.
- * Know how to tune to your local emergency radio station, in the event of a large scale disaster.
- * Plan for and get supplies for natural disasters that may be in your area: Pack an emergency supply kit and store extra medicines and equipment at your child's school.



Create a support network

Once you have created an emergency plan, it is helpful to have some back-up. Your support network may include family, neighbors, or friends that can help you and your child.

- * Tell your support network about your child's special needs and share your emergency plan 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 network 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.



Pack an Emergency Supply Kit

In addition to supplies needed for a general disaster kit, you may need to add several things to the kit for your child with special needs.

General Information and Supplies:

- * A copy of your child's up to date Care Plan , including the In Case of Emergency Form.
- * Current medical information and records stored on a CD, flash drive, or phone app (Keep one paper copy in a waterproof bag).
- * If needed: extra contact lenses, glasses, and lens supplies; batteries for hearing aids and communication devices; Special dietary foods and supplies.
- * 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 a service animal can go with you into a shelter.

Power Supplies:

- * A generator for back up power support (due to deadly fumes, *never* use a generator indoors).
- * An AC adaptor for your car for small electrical equipment such as a nebulizer.
- * A way to charge your cell phone without electricity.
- * Battery powered versions of medical equipment your child uses
- * Manual wheelchair or other non-electric equipment.

Medical Supplies and Medications:

Talk with your child's doctor about how to obtain an extra supply of medicines for emergencies. Ask if it would be safe to change a dosage in an emergency situation. If your child takes medicine administered by a clinic or hospital, talk with them about how to plan for a 3-14 day disruption. Ask your pharmacist about the shelf life and storage needs of the medicines.

- * Two-week supply of medical items including syringes, dressings, nasal cannulas, suction catheters, etc.
- * At least a three day supply of medications (fourteen days is ideal).
- * Cooler and chemical ice packs for storing medications that must be kept cold.
- * Prescription information for your wallet, survival kit, and car that includes the name, location and phone number of an out of town pharmacy.



Other Helpful Tips:

- * Pack a smaller "to go" kits for use in an evacuation and store in multiple places (car, work, school, etc.).
- * Store your supplies in an easy-to-get-to waterproof and pest-proof container.
- * Update supplies yearly, replace water every six months, and update emergency contact and medical forms as needed.
- * If you can't contact your doctor or pharmacy in a disaster, ask for help from emergency responders or staff at emergency shelters or service centers. You can get help in getting medication from a Red Cross shelter.

Emergency Preparedness Resource List
Special Needs Emergency Preparedness Information

* **Department of Homeland Security**

<http://www.ready.gov>

* **American Red Cross Information for People with Disabilities**

<https://www.redcross.org/get-help/how-to-prepare-for-emergencies/disaster-safety-for-people-with-disabilities.html>

* **Maryland Emergency Management Agency**

<http://www.mema.state.md.us/Pages/SpecialNeeds.aspx>

* **Maryland Department of Disabilities**

<http://mdod.maryland.gov/ep/Pages/Emergency-Prep-Home.aspx>

* **How to Help Children Before and After a Disaster**

<http://www.seattle.gov/emergency-management/what-can-i-do/preparedness-for-kids>

Disability specific tips

* **Mobility Challenges**

<http://www.seattle.gov/emergency-management/what-can-i-do/vulnerable-populations/mobility-concerns>

* **Hearing Impairment**

<http://www.seattle.gov/emergency-management/what-can-i-do/vulnerable-populations/deaf-and-hard-of-hearing>

* **Visual Disabilities**

<http://www.seattle.gov/emergency-management/prepare/access-and-functional-needs-blind/low-vision>

* **Special Medical Needs**

<http://www.seattle.gov/emergency-management/what-can-i-do/vulnerable-populations/medical-needs>

General Emergency Preparedness Information

* **FEMA Site**

<http://www.fema.gov/>

* **American Red Cross Site**

<http://www.redcross.org/>

* **Center for Disease Control**

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

* **Office of Preparedness and Response**

<http://preparedness.dhmh.maryland.gov/SitePages/Home.aspx>