



State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Charlie Crist
Governor

Robert A. Butterworth
Secretary

DATE: April 20, 2007

TO: District/Region Administrators and Community-Based Care CEOs

THROUGH: George Sheldon, Assistant Secretary for Operations
David Fairbanks, Acting Assistant Secretary of Programs

FROM: Patricia Badland, Director of Office of Family Safety

SUBJECT: Policy Clarification and Implementation of the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law (P.L.) 109-288) – Disaster Plan

Purpose: The purpose of this memorandum is to implement policy required by the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006. In addition, this memorandum provides a guide for updating disaster plans.

Action Required: The Act requires that all states have in place procedures providing for how the state programs assisted under the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 620-628b) would respond to a disaster. The Administration for Children and Families has issued Program Instructions specifying that this information is to be submitted to the Administration for Children and Families as part of the Annual Progress and Services Report due June 30, 2007.

Background: The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 was enacted September 2006. As per Section 6(a)(16) of the Act, states are required to have in place procedures for how the states would respond to a disaster, which should include how a state would:

- Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster;
- Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases;
- Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster;
- Preserve essential program records; and
- Coordinate services and share information with other states.

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Mission: Protect the Vulnerable, Promote Strong and Economically Self-Sufficient Families, and Advance Personal and Family Recovery and Resiliency

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Implementation Process: Lead Community-Based Care Agencies will need to update child welfare disaster preparedness plans to include the elements required by the Act. Plans will need to be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Contract Manager no later than June 1, 2007. Please forward the approved plans electronically to Taffy Compain at, Taffy_B_Compain@dcf.state.fl.us.

Current Lead Community-Based Care Agency plans have been reviewed by the Office of Family Safety and were found to already include many of the elements required by the Act. Persons tasked with updating the plans and those in an approval role may contact Taffy Compain at (850) 922-6656 or Suncom 292-6656 or email at, Taffy_B_Compain@dcf.state.fl.us to discuss a specific agency's updates.

The Office of Family Safety has developed a reference guide titled "Servicing Child Welfare Client Needs: Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Activities" (attached). The guide includes steps in addressing all new federal requirements.

Points of consideration as plans are updated include:

- Provisions for all children under supervision, including in-home cases and relative/non-relative care;
- Ensuring the availability and continuation of services, both for pre-existing and newly identified needs;
- Preparing for new child welfare cases that may arise as a result of the disaster; and
- Regarding coordination of services and sharing information with other states, the Florida Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Office has developed an interstate coordination plan to meet this need. The plan is posted at: http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/publications/fsp/icpc/icpc_disasterprep_responseplan.pdf.

Contact Information: If there are questions, please contact Taffy Compain at the phone numbers or email address provided above.

Attachment

cc: Community-Based Care Contract Managers

SERVICING CHILD WELFARE CLIENT NEEDS: Emergency and Disaster Preparedness Activities

Developing a Plan:

1. Identify all possible disasters that can impact protection of children and delivery of child welfare services that may be unique to your geographical locale and would require specific planning and response. This would also include foreseeable and unforeseeable threats.
2. Establish a process that involves consultation with all child welfare partners in plan development (local courts, Guardian Ad Litem, Child Protection Teams, law enforcement, etc.) and reaches out to common partners in times of emergency (Department of Health, hospitals, emergency management agencies, shelters, food banks, courts, volunteers, etc.).
3. Establish a procedure for all caregivers of children under supervision to provide evacuation plans (include in-home, relative, non-relative, foster and adoptive). For licensed placements, ensure that the evacuation plans are reviewed at each re-licensure.
4. Identify a single individual responsible for coordination of child welfare disaster planning and response. This individual will also be a lead also responsible for communication with local media, assigning tasks, serving as liaison to other jurisdictions and central office, and communication of expectations to staff. Identify other key staff and duties and how overall provider communications will be sustained during a threat.
5. Identify location for operations in case of serious damage to the work centers, the reporting mechanism for provider staff and methods of communication (phone trees, web-sites, cell phones, toll-free phone numbers, etc.).
6. Identify how to complete contacts with caregivers for all children under Department supervision prior to a known threat to ensure that they are following the submitted disaster plan is being followed.
7. Have a plan to secure all electronic and hard records (to include back-up servers in safe locations and proper care of electronic equipment). The plan should take into account emergencies and disasters that may present without warning.
8. Maintain a supply of emergency cash on hand in response to possible power outages in order to purchase emergency items for children or families.
9. Provide each staff member with a copy of the emergency and disaster plan and procedures and conduct training, test exercises and drills as appropriate.
10. Ensure provider training includes assisting children to handle and cope with disasters and possible relocation.
11. Ensure that providers who evacuate have critical demographic, health and service needs information with them for children in their care.
12. Update the plan regularly.

Managing Disaster:

1. Assess the availability of staff and condition of facilities and equipment. Reassign staff as demanded by conditions.
2. Ensure that provider staff and their families are provided assistance as needed.
3. Determine the essential functions that must be carried out and in what areas waivers or flexibility may be appropriate. Ensure that staff is aware of changes in functions.
4. The plan should address how providers will conduct an immediate, initial assessment of the location and needs of children under supervision, their parents and caregivers.
5. Plan to conduct an immediate assessment of changes in the needs of children, families, and caregivers (in-home, relative, non-relative and foster/adopt) served by the child welfare system resulting from the disaster. Consider the need to provide new, additional services to impacted children and families. Ensure that needed services, both pre-existing and new, are available and provided at their location. Consider the following typical needs after a traumatic event:
 - Immediate trauma services for children and families;
 - Assistance for medically fragile children and their caregivers;
 - More time for service visits;
 - Connection to other programs that provide benefit resources (e.g., rebuilding housing and Food for Florida);
 - Child care for families while they seek assistance.

Rebuilding

1. Indicate what steps the provider will take to ensure that there is the capacity to respond to potential increases in investigations, service needs and overall workload. This may include investigating and opening new cases or providing services to children and families that may have relocated from within state or from out of state. The workload management plan should address the following considerations:
 - Identification of new cases of children who are abused or neglected, or separated from their family due to the disaster, and provision of appropriate services;
 - Provision of services to children and families evacuated from other states to Florida or relocated from other jurisdictions within Florida;
 - Working through the Florida Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children Office to coordinate services and share information with other states about relocated children and families;
 - Identification of emergency placement slots in the event a foster or biological family cannot find temporary housing suitable for children;
 - Ensure that messages about services and provision of services are sensitive to the trauma that families have experienced and that they continue to be culturally competent given the stress already on families that may have cultural and language considerations;
 - Procedures for reporting information on children and families that may have been separated during the event so that they are reunified or able to communicate as quickly as possible.
2. Address emotional needs of staff to help them deal with the added stress and trauma of a disaster as related to child welfare work and their own family's situation.
3. Describe a debriefing process for staff and key stakeholders.
4. Fortify areas of strength and redesign areas that require improvement.
5. Update plans based on lessons learned, not just by providers, but by all partners in the child welfare community.
6. Ensure that staff and clients are educated and trained in emergency procedures after each plan update.