

State of Alabama
Department of Human Resources
Child Care Services Division
Emergency Preparedness Plan



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Commissioner

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Introduction

In September 2014, the federal Child Care Development Fund and Block Grant (CCDBG) was reauthorized. The CCDBG requires the Lead Agency, Alabama Department of Human Resources (ADHR), to demonstrate how ADHR will address the needs of children, including the need for safe child care, before, during and after a state of emergency declared by the Governor or a major disaster or emergency. The Disaster Plan must include guidelines for continuation of child care subsidies and child care services, and must have in place procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, lock-down, communication and reunification with families, continuity of operations, accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children with chronic medical conditions; and procedures for staff and volunteer emergency preparedness training and practice drills, including training requirements for caregivers of providers receiving CCDF (Child Care Development Fund) and other child care providers, as determined appropriate by ADHR. ADHR will operate under the guidelines of The Alabama Emergency Operations Plan (SFOP) in coordination with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA). The AEMA will conduct all response and recovery operations using the Incident Command System (ICS). The Integrated Emergency Management System (IEMS) refers to an all-hazards approach to the coordination, direction and control of disasters independent of their type, origin, size, and complexity and is the cornerstone of the State's Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, Response, Recovery, and Mitigation program. The ADHR Child Care Services Division (CCSD) has developed the following guidelines with the intent to develop, establish, and maintain a statewide Child Care Emergency Plan.

Purpose

Alabama is at risk for many potential emergencies and/or disasters. All child care providers that are licensed, registered, and regulated by ADHR including programs participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program must have an Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan (EPRP) in place. Requirements for plans are discussed later in this document.

Some emergencies and/or disasters such as severe weather threats may come with advanced warnings, however many can occur with little or no warning at all. It is necessary to plan, prepare, and practice for emergencies in order to provide for the safety and recovery of the child care services in Alabama.

Alabama

The Department of Human Resources was created in 1935 to administer the assistance programs that were part of the Social Security Act. These programs were developed to help an American public that was suffering through the financial hardships of the Great Depression. The agency's

original name was the Department of Public Welfare. In 1955, it was renamed the Department of Pensions and Security. The current name was adopted in 1986. Some programs have changed over the years to meet the changing needs of Alabama. However, the agency's primary goal has always been and always will be to help people in need.

The agency currently has about 4,300 State Merit System employees, most of whom work in the agency's 67 county departments. Although the agency employs a wide variety of professionals, social workers represent the largest category of DHR employees.

Mission Statement

To provide for the protection, well-being, and self-sufficiency of children and adults.
(Ala. Code Title 38, 26, 42 and various federal statutes).

Child Care Services Division Mission Statement

Provide Alabama's families with equal access to affordable and quality child care services.

Our Vision

Helping change lives for the better by providing the premier social welfare programs in the southeastern United States.

Our Values

- **Integrity** We are dedicated to act in a manner that merits the trust of our clients, stakeholders, and fellow employees.
- **Respect** We believe every individual has worth and potential and is deserving of being treated with dignity.
- **Commitment** We are dedicated to providing the highest quality services and support to our clients.
- **Accountability** We are responsible for the policies, standards, and decisions that frame our service to our clients.

EMERGENCY ORGANIZATION

The Alabama Emergency Management Agency is the lead State agency for coordinating events and all-hazard planning, response, and relief efforts. AEMA, in coordination with the State Coordinating Group, is responsible for advising the Governor, State and Local officials, and others to the nature, magnitude, and possible effects of a natural, technological, or national security emergency.

Specific duties of the ADHR as related to Child Care Services

The Emergency Child Care Policy is only to be applied in disaster designated counties.

1. Planning for Continuation of Services to CCDF Families

- **Provisions for continuing core CCDF functions**
 - Payment

Child Care records are maintained in off-site backup files. Subsidy payments are processed through an automated Time and Attendance System (TAS). This automation will assist in timely and accurate reimbursements in the event of a disaster. The cardholder has 10 days (current day plus 9 previous days) to enter any missing transactions on the Point of Sale (POS) device located at the provider's site. The POS device can store entries for up to 30 days. Those entries will be transmitted when the communication problem is solved. If the event extends beyond the time allowed by the TAS system Providers have the ability to request adjustments that have not been paid electronically.

Child Care Subsidy policy allows for five emergency closure days. Providers will continue to receive payment for the emergency closure days. Providers may also receive an additional five emergency closure days if their location is in an impacted county.

–Eligibility

Eligible families can be given flexibility to extend eligibility past 12 months without recertification and allow for flexible application procedures if it is determined that standard procedures are impeded or cause an undue hardship on the clients. Current month certifications can remain open for 30 additional days. The client may continue to receive uninterrupted services during this time. If the client does not reauthorize care prior to the end of 30 days, the client may lose care and the case will be closed.

–Licensing and regulatory oversight

The State's Performance Standards for Licensing Centers/Homes require that all licensed facilities have a plan for the evacuation and care of children in the case of fire, tornado,

serious accident or injury, or power failure. The plan must be posted in a conspicuous place in the facility. All programs participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program must adhere to these guidelines as part of compliance with Health and Safety Guidelines. These plans are observed by Child Care Consultants during annual monitoring visits.

Facilities identified in impacted counties or any other unforeseen disaster that must close operations or move operations to a temporary location may request an Emergency Disaster Six-Month Permit. The permit is valid for a maximum of six months from the date of issuance. At the end of the permit period, the provider must be able to meet all requirements of the State's Performance Standards to continue operation.

For issuance of the permit, minimal requirements for the health, safety, and welfare of the children must be met (see Appendix G). A facility participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program must also pass the State's Health and Safety Guidelines (see appendix C) for program operation.

- Assistance to families impacted by emergency

Families may contact their local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency or Child Care Management Agency (see appendix B) to assist in the location of a new provider. The ADHR website contains the statewide directory for locating a provider as well.

- Communication plan

Alabama Department of Human Resources maintains a dedicated Child Care Services Intake phone line (1-866-528-1694) for assistance and information. Providers are required to report instances that affect operations to ADHR within 24 hours of the incident. As needed, ADHR will share information through local television and radio as needed to alert of Governor declarations of impacted counties.

- Data security and storage

ADHR maintains and enforces facility security. Visitors are restricted to public areas and must be signed in through a reception area with proper identification. Child Care records are maintained in computerized off-site backup files through the State's Information Systems Division.

2. Coordinating with Emergency Management Agencies and Key Partners

- State Emergency Management Agency

The Alabama Emergency Management Agency(AEMA) is the lead State agency for coordinating disaster/emergency planning, response, and relief efforts. AEMA, in coordination with Alabama Department of Homeland Security (ALEA), is responsible for advising the Governor, State and local officials, and others to the nature, magnitude, and possible effects of a natural, technological, or national security emergency.

- **State agencies**

State and local agencies are assigned disaster responsibilities based upon existing capabilities as provided in local and state emergency operations plans and programs.

- **Volunteer/Advocacy organizations: VOAD**

The first responsibility is to cooperate and coordinate with government agencies to help ensure broad and thorough coverage of relief. The second, and more important responsibility, is to provide relief not provided by government on a complementary and supplementary basis to that relief which is provided by government.

- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency.**

CCR&R agencies will remain responsible for providing services and assistance as needed to meet the needs of providers and clients as directed by ADHR. See appendix B for a comprehensive list of CCR&Rs in the state.

3. Regulatory Requirements and Technical Assistance for Child Care Providers

- **Coordinating with licensing and regulatory agencies**

Child Care consultants will assess whether damaged facilities can continue operating, temporarily close, reduce enrollment, or relocate. They will also work to determine the operating status of providers that may need to be changed, or amended during a disaster. Any divergence from normal operating standards will be considered on an as needed basis and must be approved by the ADHR CCSD prior to child care centers operating which includes the issuance of a permit.

- **Working with CCR&R agencies**

CCR&R agencies will remain responsible for providing basic resource and referral services to families as needed or requested. Resource and referral must include information to help parents locate a child care program that meets their needs as well as a list to include quality indicators such as Alabama Quality Stars rating, accreditations, and license or exempt status. Each agency or service provider will be responsible for maintaining a resource and referral directory using Departmental approved software.

- **Incorporating EPRP into Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)**

Providers that participate under QRIS are monitored by applicable state agencies such as CCSD Licensing and have emergency preparedness procedures in place.

4. Provision of Temporary Child Care Services after a Disaster

- **Coordination with emergency management agencies, voluntary organizations, Alabama VOAD and CCR&Rs**

After the immediate threat to life and property has passed, or if a Presidential declaration is received, State and Federal recovery operations will be coordinated by the State's EMA (AEMA). Contact will be made with CCR&Rs for assistance in locating programs that are affected by the disaster as well as Child Care Services Licensing Intake.

- **Temporary Operating Standards**

Child care providers that continue to operate after an emergency will still be accountable to provide the same level of safety and supervision as expected prior to the event as deemed in the state's Performance Standards for Licensing. Child care programs operating under an Emergency Disaster Six-Month Permit must meet and maintain health and safety standards to remain in operation.

- **Identification and training of pre-approved child care providers**

Child Care providers will remain consistent with all required standards previously established. QEAs will continue to provide training and technical assistance to providers as needed.

5. Rebuilding Child Care after a Disaster

- **Education/training for providers ensures business continuity**

ADHR provides training through CCSD Training and Development Unit and contracts with Quality Enhancement Agencies (QEA) to assist with training for the rapid approval of qualified child care staff in order to quickly recover and allow providers to return to maximum levels of operation as quickly as possible.

- **Strategies for working with emergency officials, licensing agencies and health officials to conduct timely damage assessments**

ADHR will maintain contact with local Emergency Management officials to determine when Child Care Consultants and local health inspectors can enter the affected areas to assess for damage, safety, and usage of Child Care Facilities.

- **Information on availability of financial assistance**

Links to available assistance will be maintained on the ADHR website.

EMERGENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR PROVIDERS

Child Care Providers should be aware of the potential for emergencies and make preparations for such events. Local news and radio and official government social media outlets are generally the first to relay notice of potential threats. Providers should be prepared to contact parents if there is a threat of danger to the children and/or the facility in order for parents to make arrangements to

pick up children. Providers must report any closings to ADHR's Child Care Services Intake line at 1-866-528-1694.

All licensed, regulated, and registered providers, including those receiving CCDF Subsidy shall

- Maintain a list of names and telephone numbers for emergency agencies and first responders posted by the telephone for emergency situations.
- Maintain a plan for evacuation, shelter-in-place, and lockdown procedures and care of the children including but not limited to fire, tornado, serious accident or injury, or power failure, and active shooter.
- Emergency Preparedness and Response Plans shall be posted in a conspicuous place.
- Have current Infant-Child (Pediatric) Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Certificate (CPR) and a current Pediatric First Aid Certificate for at least two (2) persons in the facility during all hours of operation and when children are present.

Child Care Providers are required to create emergency policies. Plans shall include the following:

The center shall develop a written disaster plan and make it available to all child care staff members and employees.

- (1) The plan shall include procedures that will be used to prepare for and respond to the following types of emergency or disaster situations:
 - (a) Weather emergencies and natural disasters which include severe thunderstorms, tornadoes, flash flooding, major snowfall (severe winter weather), blizzards, ice storms or earthquakes.
 - (b) Emergency outdoor or indoor lockdown or evacuation due to threats of violence which includes active shooter, bioterrorism, or terrorism.
 - (c) Emergency or disaster evacuations due to hazardous materials and spills, gas leaks or bomb threats.
 - (d) Outbreaks, epidemics or other infectious disease emergencies.
 - (e) Loss of power, water or heat.
 - (f) Other threatening situations that may pose a health or safety hazard to the children in the center.
- (2) The disaster plan shall include details for:
 - (a) Shelter in place or evacuation, how the center will care for and account for the children until they can be reunited with the parent.

- (b) the safe evacuation of infants, toddlers and children with special needs and/or health conditions:
 - (i) including evacuating from the childcare facility, and
 - (ii) evacuating from the child care facility to the designated relocation site.
 - (c) Reunification with parents.
 - (i) Emergency contact information for the parents and the center.
 - (ii) Procedures for notifying and communicating with parents regarding the location of the children if evacuated.
 - (iii) Procedures for communicating with parents during loss of communications, no phone or internet service available.
 - (d) The location of supplies and procedures for gathering necessary supplies for staff and children if required to shelter in place.
 - (e) What to do if a disaster occurs during the transport of children or when on a field trip or routine trip.
 - (f) Training of staff or reassignment of staff duties as appropriate.
 - (g) Updating the plan on a yearly basis.
 - (h) Contact with local emergency management officials.
- (3) The plan should also be inclusive of:
- (a) Current emergency plans and procedures;
 - (b) Location and use of fire extinguishers;
 - (c) Location of the first aid and emergency supply kits;
 - (d) Phones for on-site and off-site use and;
 - (e) Drills including but not limited to fire, tornado, lock-down, and relocation.

Emergency procedures shall be practiced at least once each quarter so that children are familiar with the types of procedures and are able to be engaged, and not overwhelmed by the fear of an event. The recommended schedule is to rotate one or more types of drill each month so that all drills are practiced each quarter (4 times per year).

Conclusion

Most children under the age of five that spend their daytime hours away from their parents do so in a child care program. It is imperative that every child care program take steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of these children and be prepared to meet their needs in the case of an emergency or disaster. A disaster preparedness plan that outlines the policies and procedures that child care staff will follow during an incident will assist the programs in the meeting the needs of all.

In the event of a disastrous event at a child care provider's location, the provider should contact the Alabama Department of Human Resources Child Care Services Intake at (866) 528-1694 within 24 hours of the end of the event.

APPENDICES

The following is a list of the appendices found in this document. The documents can also be found on DHR's website (www.dhr.alabama.gov/childcareservices) and can be downloaded and used in your child care facility.

- Appendix A: Alabama Department of Human Resources Emergency Welfare Services Disaster Response Plan 2015
- Appendix B: Alabama Department of Human Resources Child Care Resource Referral and Child Care Management Agencies Maps
- Appendix C: [Health and Safety Guidelines Requirements and Procedures for Facilities Participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program](#)
- Appendix D: [Performance Standards for Day Care Center and Nighttime Centers Regulations and Procedures](#)
- Appendix E: [Performance Standards for Family Day Care Homes Family Nighttime Homes and Group Day Care Homes Group Nighttime Homes Regulations and Procedures](#)
- Appendix F: Emergency Child Care Eligibility and Provider Policy for Disaster Counties Frequently Asked Questions
- Appendix G: Emergency Disaster Six-Month Permit: [Performance Standards for Day Care Center and Nighttime Centers Regulations and Procedures](#) Section II.B.6.
- Appendix H: Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) State of Alabama Department of Human Resources 2021

Resources

Child Care Services Division

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Fax Number: (334) 353-1491

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Alabama Emergency Management Agency

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Clanton, AL 35046-2160

(205) 280-2476

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www.ema.alabama.gov

Emergency Preparation Guide

<https://www.adph.org/CEP/assets/EmergencyPrepGuide.pdf>

Free disaster planning toolkit for nonprofits and small businesses.

www.drbt toolkit.org/wa-business/

Additional Resources

FEMA - <http://www.ready.gov/be-informed>

FEMA free training: <https://training.fema.gov/is/crslist.aspx>

American Red Cross - <http://www.redcross.org/prepare/disaster-safety-library>

Save the Children - <http://savethechildren.org/GetReady>

American Academy of Pediatrics Family Readiness Kit: www.aap.org/disasters

Child Care Aware: <http://www.childcareaware.org/>

Environmental Protection Agency: <https://www.epa.gov/childcare>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/index.html>

Early Childhood Related Resources: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr/early-childhood>

CDC: <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/>

National Center for Missing and Exploited Children: <http://www.missingkids.com/Home>

Acronyms and Abbreviations

AEMA	Alabama Emergency Management Agency
SFOP	Alabama Emergency Operations Plan
ADHR	Alabama Department of Human Resources
ALDHS	Alabama Department of Homeland Security
CCDBG	Child Care Development Fund and Block Grant
CCDF	Child Care Development Fund
CCR&R	Child Care Resource and Referral Agency
CCSD	Child Care Services Division
CMA	Child Care Management Agency
EPR	Emergency Preparedness and Response
ICS	Incident Command System
IEMS	Integrated Emergency Management System
JFO	Joint Field Office
POS	Point of Sale
QRIS	Quality Rating and Improvement Systems
TAS	Time and Attendance System
VOAD	Volunteer/Advocacy organizations