

Preparing To Shelter In Place Issues For Schools And Early Childhood/ Youth Programs To Consider



PREPARING TO SHELTER IN PLACE

ISSUES FOR SCHOOLS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD/YOUTH PROGRAMS TO CONSIDER

Sheltering in place means staying inside whatever building you happen to be in at the time of an emergency or, if you are outside, going into an undamaged building nearby and staying there for a period that may last hours to several days. Officials are likely to instruct people to shelter in place if an explosion or chemical spill releases toxic dust, fumes, radiation, or chemicals outside. Community residents may want to protect themselves this way if an emergency like an electrical blackout or snowstorm makes it very difficult or unsafe for them to go anywhere else. Depending on when the emergency occurs, some people are likely to be in a place other than their home – for example, at work, school, or shopping – apart from other household members.

When almost 2,000 diverse community residents in the *Redefining Readiness* demonstration sites considered what they would face in a shelter-in-place emergency, they identified many issues that are critical to their protection. If you want the school or early childhood/youth program that *your* child attends – or the school or program where *you* work – to be prepared to protect children in this kind of emergency, get together with other people there to consider the questions below. These questions are designed to stimulate thinking about important issues, some of which you may not have considered before. There are many right answers, but don't expect to have answers right away. Instead, as you consider the questions together, decide which issues are relevant to your particular school or program and how your school or program can best address them.

If you also want your household and work place to be prepared, take a look at *Issues for Households to Consider* and *Issues for Work Places to Consider* too.

For more information about the problems people face trying to shelter in place, examples of specific actions that can be taken to resolve those problems, and an inclusive process for using this issue set, please visit www.redefiningreadiness.net.

I. RESPONSIBILITY FOR PROVIDING SHELTER

- (1) Who is the school/program responsible for protecting in a shelter-in-place emergency?**
 - Does this group include children and staff?
 - Does this group include other people who use or visit the school/program building?
 - Does this group include children or adults for whom the school/program building is a designated shelter?
- (2) Under what circumstances will the school/program instruct children and staff to shelter in the building or offer them the option to do so?**
- (3) Under what circumstances will parents or other authorized adults be allowed to pick up their children from school/program during a shelter-in-place emergency?**
 - Will they be allowed to do so if the school/program is in the danger zone where toxic substances are outside?
 - Will they be allowed to do so if other areas of the community are in the danger zone, but the school/program building is not?
- (4) What is the school/program's responsibility to children if the building is not directly in the danger zone?**
 - If an authorized adult other than a parent picks up a child during the emergency, will the school/program keep a record of who picked up the child, when the child was picked up, and where the child was taken?
 - If the emergency prevents all authorized adults from picking up a child, how will the school/program assure the child's safety?
 - How will the school/program make sure that children won't be let off a school bus unless a responsible adult is available to take care of them?

II. COMMUNICATION

- (1) How will the school/program communicate with the outside world during the emergency?**
 - If some forms of communication are not operational during the emergency, does the school/program have back-up ways to receive and send information?

(2) How will information about the emergency be transmitted to the people inside the school/program building?

- Do current strategies communicate effectively with everyone, including people who are hearing impaired or don't speak English?
- Do current strategies clearly distinguish emergencies in which people need to shelter in place from emergencies in which people need to evacuate the building?

(3) How will children and staff outside the school/program building (for example, in a playground or sports field) be notified of the emergency?

(4) What provisions have been made to enable children to communicate with their parents during the emergency?

(5) Do all school bus drivers have two-way communication devices so they can be informed of the emergency and call for instructions or help?

(6) Does the community have a hot-line or website that the school/program can contact to report the condition of the building and the people inside?

- Do parents in the community have access to this information so they can find out how their children are?
- Do relatives and friends of school/program staff have access to this information so they can find out how their loved ones are?

III. PROTECTION FROM TOXIC SUBSTANCES OUTSIDE

(1) If the school/program is in the danger zone, what actions will be taken to prevent toxic substances from coming into the building?

- How many staff know how to close or seal windows, doors, and vents; to disable automatic doors; and to turn off air conditioners?
- Are instructions for carrying out these tasks readily available so other staff could do them, too?

(2) What room(s) in the school/program will provide the best protection from toxic substances outside?

- Are these "safe" rooms large enough to accommodate *everyone* in the school/program, with enough space for people to move around and lie down?

- Will the children and staff in these rooms have safe access to communications, toilet and washing facilities, and critical basic and medical supplies?
- How will the temperature be controlled at tolerable levels if the vents and windows are closed?

(3) Will the school/program be in a “lockdown”?

- If so, what will be done to protect children and staff outside who are exposed to toxic substances?
- If not, has the school/program identified a way for people to enter and leave the building without exposing those already inside to dangerous amounts of toxic substances?

IV. BASIC AND MEDICAL NEEDS

(1) Does the school/program have supplies on hand to meet the basic needs of *everyone* who is likely to be inside at the time of a shelter-in-place emergency?

- Do these supplies need to include water, food, and utensils; hygiene, cleaning, and plumbing products; blankets, mats, or sleeping bags; flashlights, candles, matches, and tools; communications, fans and heaters, a generator; protective clothing?
- Are other basic supplies needed?
- Are supplies sufficient to meet everyone’s needs for several days?

(2) Does the school/program need to have an adequate supply of emergency and commonly used medications, emergency and first-aid supplies, and a refrigerator to store perishable medications?

- How many school/program staff are authorized to provide medical assistance and administer medications?

(3) Have parents been encouraged to bring emergency supplies for their children to be stored at the school/program?

- Do these emergency kits need to include a several-day supply of the medications and medical supplies that the child needs?
- Do these emergency kits need to include food for special dietary needs, a toothbrush and toothpaste, a change of clothes, something to keep the child entertained and occupied, a comfort toy or blanket, and things the child needs to go to sleep?

- Do parents need to store other emergency supplies for their children at the school/program?
- (4) Have parents been encouraged to provide the school/program with:**
- A record of their children’s medical problems, allergies, and medications?
 - Written permission to administer medications to their children in the event of an emergency?
- (5) Have school/program staff been encouraged to store their own emergency supplies at work?**
- Do their personal emergency kits need to include a several-day supply of the medications and medical supplies they need?
 - Do their personal emergency kits also need to include food for special dietary needs, personal hygiene products, eyeglasses or contact lens supplies, extra clothes, a sewing kit, towels, a blanket and pillow, and books or other entertainment?
 - Do staff need to store other emergency supplies?
- (6) Will all of these basic and medical supplies – provided by parents, staff, and the school/program – be accessible to the people sheltering in the safe room(s)?**
- (7) Does the school/program have procedures for distributing supplies equitably in the event of a shelter-in-place emergency?**
- Do these procedures assure that children and staff with medical conditions like diabetes will receive the food they need when they need it?

V. EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AND VIOLENCE

- (1) What has been done to help staff and children in the school/program cope with emotional distress during a shelter-in-place emergency?**
- Have staff members been given an opportunity to think about these situations in advance?
 - Have they been encouraged to make arrangements to assure that the people and animals they care about will be safe if they can’t get to them because they need to shelter in the school/program building?
 - If personal phones don’t work during the emergency, have arrangements been made to enable staff and children to communicate with loved ones who are not with them in the building?

- Have teachers and other staff been trained to help the children in their care deal with the stress of an emergency?
- (2) How will the school/program prevent unruly and violent behavior during a shelter-in-place emergency?**
- Who will be responsible for security?
 - Have they and other staff been trained to keep children and adults calm?
 - Has the school/program prepared to minimize building conditions that can make people sheltering in place unruly or violent (such as insufficient food, water, medications, and hygiene facilities; overcrowding; and extreme temperatures)?
- (3) Will a “lockdown” policy reduce or provoke unruly and violent behavior during a shelter-in-place emergency?**
- Does the school or program have an alternative to locking the doors during this kind of emergency?

VI. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES, INCENTIVES, AND SUPPORTS

- (1) What is expected of school/program staff during a shelter-in-place emergency and what training have they received to meet their responsibilities?**
- (2) Does the school/program provide any staff with bonuses or other incentives for staying on the job during an emergency?**
- (3) What if critical staff leave or don't show up?**
- Does the school/program have back-ups for the people in charge as well as everyone else who will be playing important roles during the emergency?
 - Is important information about the building readily available so that other people who may need to take over will know where things are and what to do?
 - Does the school/program have policies to protect staff members' jobs and income if they can't get to work because they are sheltering somewhere else during the emergency?

VII. EMERGENCY PLANNING PROCESS

- (1) Who has been involved in developing the school/program's plans to respond to a shelter-in-place emergency?**
 - What has been the role of teachers, other staff, parents, and children?
 - What has been the role of other people who use or visit the building on a regular basis?
- (2) Who is aware of the school/program's plans and how have they been informed?**
 - What do staff and the members of their households know?
 - What do parents and children know?
 - What do other people who use the building on a regular basis know?
- (3) How has the school/program practiced its plans and evaluated the effectiveness of its plans?**
- (4) How often does the school/program review and modify its plans?**
- (5) What kinds of incentives or supports would help the school/program prepare for sheltering in place?**

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