



# Coping With Disasters and Strengthening Systems: Disaster Impact Planning Matrix



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Many types of disasters can have similar impacts or negative consequences regardless of the actual event that has occurred. For example, power or communication outages are impacts common to many types of natural and human-caused disasters.

This *Disaster Impact Planning Matrix* can help agency disaster planning teams assess their capacity to respond to common disaster impacts and plan for them going forward. Teams can use the Disaster Impact Planning Tool at the end of this document to brainstorm additional disaster impacts, activities, and questions to help support the development of a child welfare agency disaster plan.

For additional resources on disaster planning, response, and recovery, please visit the Coping With Disasters and Strengthening Systems webpage [Coping With Disasters and Strengthening Systems webpage](#).

Disaster Impact	Preparatory Activities	Additional Questions
<p><b>Onsite and in-person meetings and home visits are suspended or severely limited (including staff meetings, home visits and face-to-face contacts with children, youth, and families)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assess agency technology capability for virtual work and meetings with your IT team</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Ensure staff have work-issued mobile devices such as laptops, tablets, phones, and, if possible, internet hot spots and are trained to use them</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assess the possibility of access to laptops or mobile devices with video capability and the internet or mobile data capability for youth and families for visitation and court purposes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work with staff, youth, and families to create contact lists with the contact information of staff members, attorneys, and others with whom they regularly interact</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Develop policies, protocols, and best practices to continue holding meetings and visits remotely</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Practice working and meeting remotely before a disaster occurs (including identifying alternative locations for staff to meet, ahead of time) at least annually</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish a point of contact for troubleshooting virtual meetings during a disaster response and communicate about this resource to staff before a disaster strikes</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate the agency technology plan with other service providers and organizations such as courts, mental health facilities, and tribes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Does the agency have a communication plan for times when staff cannot meet onsite?</li> <li>▷ What will child welfare staff do if there is a power outage? A mobile tower outage?</li> <li>▷ Do youth and families (and staff) know what to do (i.e., who to contact, where to go, how to get what they need) in case of an emergency when they cannot physically meet with child welfare staff?</li> <li>▷ Where and/or how can families, youth, and children meet if they suddenly become homeless due to disaster?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Utilities outage (e.g., electricity, water, internet)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assess agency utility needs (e.g., list everything at the agency that requires electricity to run, evaluate water needs)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Provide for the distribution of power packs for staffs' devices and ensure that these are regularly charged (ideally these would be powered by solar energy)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Purchase backup generators (if financially feasible) and batteries for agency use in an emergency</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work with youth and families to plan for home utility outages (including for critical medical or other equipment) in their personal disaster plans</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plan for water outages at agency offices</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Coordinate with local authorities to refer families for water and shelter needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Does the agency communication plan address how staff will communicate with each other and youth and families in case of a power outage?</li> <li>▷ Do families and youth have a means of transportation to get to an alternative housing location?</li> <li>▷ How will the agency respond in case of a water shutoff or boil order in their jurisdiction?</li> <li>▷ How will information from local authorities on available services, water distribution, or shelter be conveyed to families and youth in power or utility outages?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Communication outage (e.g., mobile towers or landlines are down)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate agency communication methods (e.g., landline phones, mobile devices, computers, walkie talkies, etc.) and ensure that the agency has multiple modes of communication</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create paper copies of phone and email lists of staff and families in case electronic lists are unavailable</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Create text messaging capacity across all mobile devices (possibly through a secure, cloud-based system like CodeRed)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work with youth and families to ensure that, as much as possible, they have multiple modes of communication available to them, including an emergency radio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Does the agency have backup systems in case one type of communication is unavailable?</li> <li>▷ How will the agency communicate with staff and families if both landlines and mobile towers are down?</li> <li>▷ Do youth and families know how to get vital information if there is no internet service and phones are down?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Inability to access important records</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Assess the agency's record storage methods and technology</li> <li>❑ Store the following information on a cloud-based system with statewide accessibility (these should be printed every 6 months, if possible, and stored in a secure location in case the power is out): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Disaster plan details including roles and responsibilities</li> <li>■ Case, child, and family contact information and other critical information as needed (e.g., medical and court records)</li> <li>■ Disaster plan contact information for staff, families, providers, and youth</li> <li>■ Human resource data (employee information, payroll systems)</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ Consider using offsite backup for the most important information that is not stored in the cloud and converting paper records to electronic ones</li> <li>❑ Ask foster families to create a list of vital records to take with them in the case of an emergency relocation in their disaster plans (e.g., prescriptions, recent medical reports, medical providers' name and contact information, immunization history, educational records, court orders)</li> <li>❑ Educate transitioning youth on the importance of maintaining a list of vital records to take with them in the case of an emergency relocation in their disaster plans (e.g., prescriptions, recent medical reports, medical providers' name and contact information, immunization history, educational records, court orders)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Do all staff understand how to access records when they may not have access to their work computers?</li> <li>▷ What are the essential records staff need to do their work? How can these be made accessible if systems are down?</li> <li>▷ Do staff need to have hard copies of records and how can the agency ensure that these are properly secured?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Staff and families are displaced from their homes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain contact with local authorities regarding available services for children and youth under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Include a detailed process for locating children and youth and document their location(s) in case of a disaster</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish data sharing agreements with agencies running emergency shelters to help locate displaced children after a disaster, including neighboring counties and states</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Plan for agency communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Specify a process for transferring cases temporarily to other staff members; include procedures for access to case records and contact lists if child welfare staff have been displaced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Does the agency have access to technology to help them locate displaced children and youth (e.g., GPS technology, walkie talkies)?</li> <li>▷ Does the agency have hardcopy phone and address lists of youth, children, and families currently in care and staff members?</li> <li>▷ Does the agency have at least two emergency contacts identified who could help locate displaced staff, youth, and families?</li> <li>▷ Do youth and families have access to technology (e.g., cell phones with data, access to internet) to be able to be reachable?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Children, youth, families and staff experience high levels of fear, trauma, and stress</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the agency's access to trauma services and level of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practice</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Work to increase the knowledge of trauma-responsive practice agencywide, especially among staff most likely to work directly with children, youth, and families</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep an updated list of mental health providers in the agency's locale (e.g., grief and trauma counselors) and coordinate with them to ensure that they will be available to support agency staff and families when disaster hits</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Establish ongoing internal support services to help staff deal with the primary and secondary trauma related to the disaster (e.g., counseling, offering space and time to discuss concerns and process emotions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ What can your agency do to increase the level of knowledge about trauma-responsive approaches and techniques among staff?</li> <li>▷ How will the agency work to offer trauma care to families and staff?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Loss of life (including children, youth, families, staff, community members, or others)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Evaluate the agency's access to trauma services and level of trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practice</li> <li>❑ Keep an updated list of mental-health providers in the agency's locale and coordinate with them to ensure that they will be available to support agency personnel and families in case of loss of life</li> <li>❑ Prepare for communication with family members if the loss of life includes children in care.</li> <li>❑ Plan for communicating with staff (this should be done in advance of the media response)</li> <li>❑ Plan for communicating with the media about a loss-of-life event, including press releases, media kits, and briefings</li> <li>❑ Prepare for communicating with elected officials in this scenario</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Who are your area's major media outlets? Elected officials?</li> <li>▷ Who will be the agency's spokesperson or communication specialist to communicate important developments to these entities?</li> <li>▷ Who will be the contact person(s) with officials in the morgue in the event of the death of children and youth in custody (e.g., to arrange for identification of remains) and communicate about loss of life with families and the courts?</li> <li>▷ Are agency staff familiar with the customs and traditions around death in the communities they serve? Have these been documented, so they are accessible if needed?</li> <li>▷ What are the agency's policies and protocols for communicating with media and officials in the event of a death in custody?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Staff disruption or loss of leadership</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Designate the disaster team member in charge of disaster response and include two or three alternate staff members who can take charge if the designee is not able to assume the role</li> <li>❑ Identify essential functions requiring continuous performance during a disaster, and designate managers and alternate staff to oversee those functions; essential functions are those that the agency absolutely must do to continue its work (i.e., mission critical activities)</li> <li>❑ Define the roles and responsibilities of managers who have been given authority to make certain decisions for the agency and provide those managers with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Notice of their assigned roles</li> <li>■ A copy of the plan giving them authority</li> <li>■ Basic training on how to carry out their assignments during a disaster</li> </ul> </li> <li>❑ Describe how to put the plan in place and notify managers or alternates during disasters (activation procedures)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Does every role identified in the disaster plan have backup staff? Are the backup staff effectively prepared to step in?</li> <li>▷ What will the agency do if a significant number of staff are unable to work due to illness or the requirement to quarantine?</li> <li>▷ Does your communication plan specify how managers and staff will communicate during disaster (e.g., phone trees)?</li> </ul>

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<p><b>Interruption of in-person judicial services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Identify which judicial processes are time sensitive and essential for agency work to continue</li> <li>❑ Liaise with local courts to create a plan for continuing work in case of disaster</li> <li>❑ Adopt policies that allow agencies and courts to work virtually if they cannot meet in person (this may require coordination with the county, if applicable, and state agency or elected officials)</li> <li>❑ Ensure that children, youth, and families will have access to the necessary technology for virtual meetings and access to training on how to use these if needed</li> <li>❑ Plan with courts on how cases can be heard by a displaced judge involving displaced families and children and practice the plan in advance to ensure it is viable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ Does your agency have software (e.g., Skype for Business, Zoom, Microsoft Teams) with virtual meeting capability?</li> <li>▷ What are the policies and legal agreements that need to be in place for virtual work to take place between agencies and courts for children, youth, and families?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interruption of medical, education, transportation, or other services</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❑ Encourage foster care providers to have effective wi-fi access to support distance learning</li> <li>❑ Establish effective relationships and communication with school districts to access distance learning technology/materials and get it to the children and youth</li> <li>❑ Develop a plan in advance with foster care providers on supporting youth in a distance learning environment</li> <li>❑ Develop a plan for telehealth as appropriate and necessary</li> <li>❑ Ensure local emergency medical agencies have information on group care facilities and key group care and state agency contacts</li> <li>❑ Plan for alternative transportation for youth and families if their regular modes of transportation aren't available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▷ What are the additional staffing needs for group care providers to support distance learning?</li> <li>▷ What are the additional support needs for resource (foster) families to support distance learning, including addressing income loss or providing alternative in-person supports?</li> <li>▷ Have you considered developing peer groups for resource families and providers to support distance learning?</li> <li>▷ Is there a team of medical personnel who can be available for telehealth?</li> <li>▷ Have you considered how to get prescriptions filled for essential medications?</li> <li>▷ Who are the emergency management contacts in each of your communities?</li> </ul>

# Disaster Impact Planning Tool

Use the following worksheet to plan for and brainstorm additional disaster impacts, preparatory activities, and considerations not covered in the Matrix above.

Disaster Impact	Preparatory Activities	Additional Questions

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