



# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

## Department of Early Education and Care

Emergency Contingency Plans

Field Operations Policy

- ❖ **Applicable to: Funded Programs**
- ❖ **Effective Date: October 1, 2019**
- ❖ **Supersedes: New Policy**

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### POLICY STATEMENT

In 2014, the Federal Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Reauthorization Act became law. This law reauthorized Federal funding of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), which is used primarily to provide States, Territories, and Tribes with funding for subsidized child care for low income families. The CCDBG Reauthorization included multiple changes to various requirements regarding the provision of child care. These changes were required in order to ensure that children are receiving care in the safest and highest quality environment possible.

In order to ensure timely adoption of certain changes, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) is issuing new policies to clarify and explain these changes. **This policy outlines the Emergency Contingency Planning requirements for Funded Programs.**

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All child care providers must be prepared to ensure that the children in their care are kept safe and protected at all times, including during an emergency or disaster. **Funded Programs are required to develop written plans detailing procedures for meeting potential emergencies, including but not limited to, missing children, fire, natural disasters, potential threats to the safety of the children and staff from internal or external sources, and loss of power, heat or water.** Some emergencies may require evacuation of the child care premises. In other situations, it may be best to take shelter within the facility or lockdown the facility until the emergency is resolved. While some situations may involve only the child care facility itself; others may include the neighborhood or immediate area. No matter what the circumstances, planning ahead and adequate preparation (practice evacuation drills must be held monthly under a variety of circumstances), will help children and adults remain as safe as possible when an emergency occurs.

When dealing with a natural disaster, program administrators should contact local authorities and/or listen to radio/television or check the internet to determine whether to evacuate or shelter in place. Providers should consider the resources for shelter available in the neighborhood, seek permission (in advance) from proper authorities, and make sure there is a safe, comfortable space for the children there. In addition, programs should identify another location further away, outside

of the neighborhood, in the event that the emergency is more widespread.

If the program must evacuate the facility, the program must be prepared to take emergency contact information for all children, emergency medical treatment consent forms, special medications needed by the children, and first aid supplies. The program may want to have a “disaster kit” prepared that can be quickly retrieved, containing all the necessary information, and several others with toys and activity plans to engage the children. As with any off-site activity, the children must be counted before departing the program, counted again once outside, counted again once on the transportation vehicle, and counted one final time upon arriving at the destination. Since Funded Programs are required to have a working telephone available, the program must determine whether a telephone will be available at the destination for use in notifying parents, or whether cellular telephone will be used. Remember to notify EEC immediately about any emergency relocation. Document when the children are picked up from the temporary location and by whom. In addition, find out from emergency personnel the town where the local meeting place is in the event of a major evacuation that includes an entire town, city or geographic area.

## **Evacuation**

In the event of a **fire, natural disaster, or other situation requiring evacuation of the building** (such as a chemical spill or bomb threat), the plan must specify:

- escape routes from each floor/area of the child care home or facility;
- a designated meeting place outside of the child care home or facility;
- a method of contacting the fire department or other appropriate authorities after the home or facility has been evacuated;
- where the children will be taken if it is necessary to leave the premises;
- how children will be transported to the alternate location, including if the program will have its own vehicle available to transport the children to an emergency location or whether you will need assistance from emergency vehicles;
- how the program will ensure that all children are accounted for before and after leaving the program site and after arriving at the temporary location;
- how the program will meet children’s needs for medication, food, first aid, and activities in the temporary location; and
- how parents will be notified of the children’s location.

## **Sheltering in Place**

In some emergency situations, it may be safer to remain on site until the emergency has ended. In the event of severe weather or other emergencies creating a **power outage, loss of heat or water, if the program will continue to operate on site** the plan must address the following:

- How will the program meet the need for heat, telephone service, fire and smoke detection alarms, lighting, hot and cold water, and the preparation and storage of food during the emergency?
- How will the program meet the requirements for toileting, flushing toilets, diapering, hand

washing, and dish washing, if necessary?

- How will educators keep the children safe and comfortable while sheltering in place? Consider whether emergency supplies of food, water, blankets, flashlights, diapers, baby formula, clothing and other necessities are available on site.
- How will educators keep the children engaged during the emergency? You may want to set aside special activities for the children until the situation resolves.
- Is it necessary to move to an interior area of the building, away from windows, such as a basement, interior room or hallway (in the event of a tornado, for example)?
- Who will be responsible for shutting off electricity, gas and water service, if necessary? It is best to contact your local building inspector, board of health, fire department or other emergency agency for their advice regarding any of the above emergencies.

## **Lock-Down**

**In the event of a potential threat from an intruder inside or outside the program**, your response will depend on a number of factors, including the size and type of construction of your facility, the number of classrooms, the number and ages of children in the program, the proximity of children to exterior exits, and the degree to which the intruder is armed. You must develop facility-specific **“lock-down” procedures** designed to keep children and staff safe within the facility until police or other emergency responders can respond and eliminate the threat. In a facility with multiple classrooms, such as a school, <sup>1</sup>“lock-down” typically involves gathering all the children in their classrooms, closing and locking<sup>2</sup> all interior doors, and covering interior classroom windows. Lights in each classroom should be turned off, and children should be asked to sit on the floor and remain quiet, out of sight lines from the door. A cellular telephone, land-line or other means of communicating within and outside of the facility must be available at all times. If there is a more secure space that can be locked within or near the classroom, such as a closet, bathroom or other area without windows, it may be best to gather children there. In a program with a single classroom or in a home setting, a closet or bathroom space may be the best available option. However, in certain situations (depending on the proximity of the threat, the number of staff available and the possibility of escape), it may be best for some or all of the occupants to flee the building when an intruder enters. In either case, advance planning is necessary. Your plan must address:

- who is responsible for calling for lock-down or evacuation;
- how program staff will be notified when a lock-down is necessary, and when it has ended;
- where in the facility children will be gathered;
- who is responsible for locking doors, gathering children (depending on their location within the facility) or leading children from the facility;
- who is responsible for notifying police and other emergency officials, as well as parents and others who may need to be notified.
- how the program will ensure that all children are accounted for before, during and after

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<sup>1</sup> Programs located in public school buildings should contact school administrators to determine whether a “lock-down” procedure is in place for the school, and shall consider implementing the school’s existing plan, as appropriate.

<sup>2</sup> Programs should consult with their local building inspectors before installing any additional interior locks, such as deadbolts.

- the emergency; and
- how the program will ensure access to sufficient supplies (food, water, necessary medications, first aid supplies, diapers, infant formula) to meet the children's immediate needs if the emergency extends for more than a few minutes.

## **Missing Child**

Programs must include in their plans procedures for responding to a missing child. Such procedures should identify which staff will be responsible for searching for a missing child; which areas of the facility or the outdoor area will be searched first; at what point will outside authorities be notified, and who must be notified, and by whom; and what impact such an occurrence will have on the regular routines and activities of the program, including activities and children in other classrooms or areas of the building. Plans must be specific to the individual program site, and must take into consideration whether the facility is open to the public and may include individuals other than parents and program employees. In addition, the plan must include procedures to address missing children during off-site activities, such as field trips.

EEC requires that programs share their procedures for meeting potential emergencies (emergency contingency plans) with parents prior to enrollment, and review and update their plans regularly. Plans must be sufficient to meet the needs of all children in care, regardless of age or disability. In preparing your emergency contingency plan EEC strongly recommends that programs contact emergency management personnel in their city or town to obtain current information on the specifics of the emergency evacuation and disaster plans in place for that specific location. A list of local emergency management directors and guidance in developing an emergency preparedness plan can be found at <http://www.mass.gov/mema>.

## **Additional Resources**

**Early Childhood Disaster-Related Resources for Early Childhood Education Providers**, Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr/information-for-providers](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr/information-for-providers)

**Child Care Resources for Disasters and Emergencies**, Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

[www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/child-care-resources-for-disasters-and-emergencies](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/child-care-resources-for-disasters-and-emergencies)

**School Safety during Emergencies: What Parents Need to Know**, American Academy of Pediatrics.

[www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Actions-Schools-Are-Taking-to-Make-Themselves-Safer.aspx](http://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/all-around/Pages/Actions-Schools-Are-Taking-to-Make-Themselves-Safer.aspx)

**Evacuating v. Shelter-in place: When should someone evacuate versus sheltering-in-place?**, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

[www.ready.gov/faq-details/Evacuating-v-Shelter-in-place-1370032121004](http://www.ready.gov/faq-details/Evacuating-v-Shelter-in-place-1370032121004)

**Tips for Protecting Children in Violence-Based Emergencies**, Save the Children Federation.

[www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/emergency-prep/GRGS-VIOLENCE-EMERGENCIES-TIPS.PDF](http://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/emergency-prep/GRGS-VIOLENCE-EMERGENCIES-TIPS.PDF)

**Children in Disasters: Teachers and Childcare**, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/index.html)