

## Section III:

Developing and Implementing a  
Disaster Plan

## Key Messages

- ◆ **The purpose of a disaster plan is to have policies and procedures in place before an event occurs.**
- ◆ **A good disaster plan focuses on likely hazardous events, but is also adaptable to any emergency situation.**
- ◆ **If your Head Start program has more than one site, each site should have a plan that addresses its unique needs as well as the program's overall disaster plan.**

**INTRODUCTION**

After you have identified the hazardous events that may impact your Head Start program, the areas in which your program is particularly vulnerable, and the resources you have or need to effectively respond to a disaster, it's time to review your current disaster policies and procedures and/or put new ones in place. This will prepare your Head Start program to effectively respond and recover when a disaster occurs. This is your disaster plan. The three main components of the plan are Pre-Event, Incident Response, and Recovery. This section of the workbook provides details on what should be included in each component. To help assure that you've covered all the bases in your disaster plan, there is a Disaster Plan Checklist ([Form 3A](#)) in the [Toolbox](#).

## Part One: Pre-Event

This section will guide you through the key ingredients of the Pre-Event part of your disaster plan. If your organization has planned *before* a disaster occurs, you're more likely to react to a situation smoothly and effectively.

### Section 1A: Introduction

The first section of your plan should be an introduction. Elements include:

- Purpose of the plan
  - ☞ Why does your organization need an emergency plan?
  - ☞ What does your organization hope to accomplish?
- List of organizational participants
  - ☞ Who in the organization helped to write the plan?
- Documentation of plan approval and policies for implementation
  - ☞ How and by whom is the plan reviewed and approved?
  - ☞ When is the plan activated?
  - ☞ Who decides to activate the plan?
- Policies for plan maintenance and evaluation
  - ☞ When and how is the plan revised, and by whom?
  - ☞ How is the effectiveness of the plan evaluated?
- Supporting signatures/list of stakeholders, including:
  - ☞ The Head Start program director and other personnel
  - ☞ Organizations in the community that have helped in developing or reviewing the plan and/or that may be called upon for assistance when a disaster occurs. Examples include the local fire and police departments, local chapter of the American Red Cross, health department, emergency management agency for the community, etc.

## Part One: Pre-Event

### Section 1B: Emergency Contacts

This section of your disaster plan should include:

- Essential emergency phone numbers (both local and outside the area) such as sister schools, church groups, etc.
- Contact information for staff and volunteers
  - ☞ Include home, work, and cell phone numbers as well as local and out-of-state emergency contacts
- Addresses and phone numbers for all local Head Start sites

### Section 1C: Information on Interagency Relationships

An emergency becomes a disaster when your organization is unable to deal with the situation on its own. Prepare for this contingency by assembling a list of organizations and resources that may be able to help you.

Contacting and establishing relationships with these potential resources can help streamline the aid process when a disaster occurs. It is especially helpful if you have a prearranged written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that lays out the terms of the relationship between Head Start and the other organization, e.g., what services the organization will provide to Head Start and what Head Start will do in return. Section IV provides more details on setting up MOUs and a sample MOU ([Form 4B](#)) can be found in the [Toolbox](#).

This section of your disaster plan should include:

- Contact information for local aid organizations such as the Red Cross
- Copies of all Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)

## Part One: Pre-Event

### Section 1D: Education and Training

Section V of the workbook provides information on educating and training staff, volunteers, children, and families on disaster preparedness and response. This section of your disaster plan should outline the policies and procedures your Head Start program has for undertaking these activities.

This section of your disaster plan should include:

- Policy and procedures for:
  - ☞ Educating and training staff in disaster response policies and procedures
  - ☞ Educating and training children in disaster response
  - ☞ Educating and/or training families in disaster preparedness and response
  - ☞ Examples of educational materials and resources can also be included
- Documentation of trainings and exercises conducted
  - ☞ Brief description of training or exercise
  - ☞ Who conducted the training or led the exercise
  - ☞ Who participated in the training or exercise
  - ☞ Brief description of lessons learned and suggested revisions for disaster policies and/or procedures (if applicable)
- Documentation of evacuation drills
  - ☞ When drills were conducted
  - ☞ Receiving sites used
- Documentation of shelter in place drills
  - ☞ When drills were conducted
  - ☞ Duration of drills

## Part One: Pre-Event

### Section 1E: Watches and Warnings

It is important to identify warning systems that exist in your community. These include sirens, alarms, weather radio, the Emergency Alert System (EAS), news radio, and television. Your disaster plan should include a detailed list of actions to be taken by your Head Start site in response to a watch or warning.

A watch indicates that a particular hazard is *possible*, meaning that conditions are more favorable than usual for its occurrence. It's a recommendation for planning, preparedness, and increased awareness. Examples of some action steps to take in the event of a watch include:

- Increasing your level of alertness
  - ☞ Listening for further information
  - ☞ Strategizing about what to do if the danger materializes
  - ☞ Preparing to take potential actions (hazard-specific)

A warning indicates that a particular weather hazard is either imminent or has been reported. It indicates that there is a need to take action to protect life and/or property. The type of hazard is reflected in the type of warning. Examples of some actions that you may need to take in the event of a warning include:

- Seeking Information
  - ☞ Contact point for further assistance
  - ☞ Contact point for assistance (MOU partners)
- Protecting People
  - ☞ Sheltering in place
  - ☞ Evacuating
  - ☞ Boarding up windows
- Protecting Property
  - ☞ Installing shutters
  - ☞ Securing contents (furniture, etc.)
  - ☞ Turning off utilities

## Part Two: Incident Response

This part of your plan will define the actions to be taken in the event of an actual emergency. It covers the roles of Head Start personnel as well as the supplies that your site will need in order to respond to a disaster.

### Section 2A: Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities

Section V of the workbook describes disaster response teams and how these teams may be organized and used. In addition to having an Incident Coordinator, your Head Start program may have response teams such as:

<i>Child Care</i>	<i>Safety &amp; Security</i>
<i>Communications</i>	<i>Search &amp; Rescue</i>
<i>Documentation</i>	<i>Student &amp; Staff Accounting</i>
<i>Fire Suppression</i>	<i>Supplies &amp; Equipment</i>
<i>First Aid</i>	

As the team names imply, each response team has specific responsibilities in the event of an emergency. How teams are organized and their specific responsibilities will vary across Head Start programs, depending on program needs and resources. This part of your disaster plan should include a list of your program's response teams, a description of the responsibilities of each team, and a list of the members of the team. Examples of team descriptions and checklists are included in the [Toolbox](#).

This section of your program's disaster plan should include:

- Organizational chart of disaster response teams
- Description of the responsibilities of and the skills and supplies needed for each of your program's disaster response teams
- Team assignments/team forms

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2B: Emergency Supplies

Emergency supplies are an important part of disaster preparedness. Each Head Start site in your program, including administrative offices, should maintain an Emergency Cache. Each cache should contain enough supplies to sustain people at that site for up to three days (see pg. 3.8). Be sure to familiarize your staff and volunteers with the locations and contents of your supply caches.



**Note:** Trash barrels on wheels make good Emergency Cache storage containers that can be moved easily!

In addition to these large containers of supplies, we recommend having numerous Emergency Kits at each site. Each classroom should have one of these smaller kits (see pg. 3.9). Backpacks or plastic buckets with lids make good containers; however, be sure that the kits are not too heavy and that they are easy to carry in the event of evacuation.

Staff and volunteers should be encouraged to keep their own personal emergency supplies either in their car or another place at work. Individual emergency supplies include a change of clothing, a pair of comfortable sturdy shoes, prescription medications, and extra eye glasses.

This section of your disaster plan should include:

- List of Emergency Caches and Emergency Kits kept at each site
- Locations and contents of Caches and Kits
- Program's policy for replenishing and rotating supplies (who is responsible, where supplies are obtained, how supplies are paid for, how often supplies are refreshed)

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2B: Emergency Supplies, continued

The following charts list Emergency Cache and Emergency Kit supply contents. A more extensive supply list ([Form 3B](#)), designed specifically for schools and classrooms and adapted from the Red Cross (<http://www.redcross.org/disaster/masters/supply.html>) may be found in the [Toolbox](#).

<u>Emergency Cache</u>	
√ Water (1 gallon per person per day)	√ Sleeping bags or blankets
√ Flashlight and extra batteries	√ Paper cups, plates, and plastic utensils
√ Battery powered radio and extra batteries	√ Cash
√ Plastic garbage bags and toilet paper	√ Non-electric can opener, utility knife
√ Diapers and wipes	√ Matches in a water proof container
√ Personal hygiene items and feminine supplies	√ Signal flare
√ Non-perishable food items, including food for children and others with special nutritional needs	√ Paper and pencil or pen
√ First Aid kit	√ Games/activity items for children, in order to take the focus off of the emergency
√ Prescription and over-the-counter medications	√ Copies of class lists and Emergency Cards for each child and staff member
√ Map of area for evacuating and for locating shelters	√ Copy of the agency's disaster plan
√ Duct tape and plastic sheeting	√ Keys
√ A whistle to signal for help	√ Student release forms
	√ Copies of any MOUs, and contact information of partners
	√ Work gloves

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2B: Emergency Supplies, continued

#### Emergency Kit

- √ Flashlight and extra batteries
- √ Battery powered radio and extra batteries
- √ First Aid kit
- √ Prescription and over-the-counter medications
- √ Map of area for evacuating and for locating shelters
- √ Paper and pencil or pen
- √ Games/activity items for children, in order to take the focus off of the emergency
- √ Copies of class lists and Emergency Cards for each child and staff member
- √ Copy of the agency's disaster plan
- √ Keys
- √ Student release forms
- √ Copies of any MOUs and contact information of partners

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2C: Maps

This section provides guidelines to help your organization cope with emergencies that require everyone to *evacuate* or *shelter in place*. It is essential that you adapt these instructions to the unique characteristics at each of your Head Start sites, as building and other important factors will vary by location. Below is a list of key maps that will be helpful when needing to evacuate or shelter in place. In some cases you may want to combine maps. However, keep in mind that maps need to be easy to read and follow. These maps should be created ahead of time and copies should be included in your disaster plan, distributed to staff and volunteers, and posted in appropriate locations.

- Maps of evacuation routes — From each room, map out the shortest route to a building exit without using an elevator. Post a copy of this route on the wall in that room. It is a good idea to also show an alternate route in case the first is impassable. Also, mark meeting points.
- General facility maps — It is also a good idea to map where the following items and places are located.
  - ☞ Emergency Caches
  - ☞ Fire extinguishers
  - ☞ Utility controls and shutoffs (include instructions)
  - ☞ Designated rooms for sheltering
  - ☞ Evacuation meeting points

A copy of these maps should also be kept in each Emergency Cache and Kit. Make sure that any keys needed to access these items or locations are readily available. Remember, each classroom should have an Emergency Preparedness Kit.

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2D: Evacuation Policies and Procedures

In some emergencies, Head Start sites will need to be evacuated. This means moving students, staff, and volunteers away from a threatened area to a safer place. This could simply mean exiting the building, or it could mean leaving the immediate area or even the local community. Evacuation may have to be done on foot or transportation may be needed. In any of these situations, having an evacuation plan in place and practicing the evacuation procedures on a regular basis will help ensure that everyone gets out safely, is accounted for, and is reunited with their family as soon as possible.

The following steps provide a general outline of what to do in an evacuation:

- Stay calm; remember that you have practiced these procedures before.
- Safely stop your work.
- Calmly assemble and make note of all the children in your care.
- Collect your Emergency Kit and take it with you.
- Take your personal belongings if it is safe to do so.
- Close your office door and window, but do not lock them.
- Proceed with children to the nearest exit, using the evacuation route provided. Do not use the elevator.
- Proceed to the designated meeting point and report to the person responsible for taking "roll."
- Wait for any instructions from authorized emergency responders. If you or your facility's manager have any concerns, do not re-enter the building until instructed that it is safe to do so by the authorized officials.

Remember, it is very important that these steps be practiced by staff, volunteers, and children on a regular basis.

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2D: Evacuation Policies and Procedures, continued

In addition to the maps described on page 3.10, your Head Start program's disaster plan should include the following:

- Evacuation policies and procedures including:
  - ☞ Who is in charge of the evacuation
  - ☞ How the need for evacuation is communicated to staff
  - ☞ What teachers need to take with them when they leave
  - ☞ How children with special needs are taken care of
  - ☞ Location of outside meeting place(s)
  - ☞ Transportation procedures, if applicable
  - ☞ How procedures differ by type of hazardous event
  - ☞ Procedures for contacting parents/caretakers and releasing children to their families
  - ☞ How often evacuation drills are done at each site
- Documentation of evacuation drills

**Note:** Specific details of evacuation procedures will differ somewhat for each site in your Head Start program.



**Question:** Do children in your program take their shoes off to nap?

How would this be handled if you needed to evacuate the site in the middle of nap time?

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2E: Sheltering in Place

In the event of an emergency where hazardous materials may have been released near your Head Start site, you may be instructed to shelter in place. This means selecting a small, interior room, with no or few windows, and taking refuge there. It does not mean sealing off your entire building or going to a storm shelter.

The following action steps, adapted from the American Red Cross, will help you to develop policies and procedures for sheltering in place at your Head Start site(s).

#### Pre-Event Planning:

- Select interior room(s) with the fewest windows or vents. The room(s) should have adequate space for everyone to be able to sit comfortably. Classrooms may be used if there are no windows or the windows are sealed and cannot be opened. Large storage closets, utility rooms, meeting rooms, and even a gymnasium without exterior windows will also work well. **Note:** Make sure you have at least one telephone with the school's listed telephone number available in the room. If the school has voicemail, be ready to change the recording to indicate that the school is closed and that students and staff are remaining in the building until authorities advise that it is safe to leave.
- Provide for a way to make announcements over the school-wide public address system.
- Identify Head Start staff or others familiar with your building's mechanical systems who can help shut down ventilation systems.



**Note:** Sheltering rooms should be designated ahead of time and marked on maps.

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2E: Sheltering in Place, continued

#### Sheltering During an Event (adapted from the American Red Cross):

- Close the school or building. Use reverse evacuation procedures to bring students, faculty, and staff to the predetermined locations mentioned in pre-event planning.
- Close and lock all windows, exterior doors, and any other openings to the outside.
- Close window shades, blinds, or curtains if you are told there is danger of explosion.
- Have staff familiar with your building's mechanical systems turn off all fans and heating and air conditioning systems.
- Gather essential disaster supplies (see pages 3.8-3.9)
- Call emergency contacts.
- Bring everyone into the room. Shut and lock the door.
- Seal all cracks around the door(s) and any vents into the room with duct tape and plastic sheeting (heavier than food wrap).
- Write down the names of everyone in the room and call your school's designated emergency contact to report who is in the room with you.
- Listen for an announcement from local officials via portable battery-assisted radios and stay where you are until you are told that it is safe to leave.

Based on the action steps just described, your Head Start program's disaster plan should include the following:

- Shelter in Place Policies and Procedures
- Documentation of Shelter in Place Drills

## Part Two: Incident Response

### Section 2F: Hazard-Specific Information

Section II of this workbook guides you through a community risk assessment. Once this form has been completed, include a copy of it in your disaster plan. Using the assessment results, create fact sheets about the most relevant hazards for your area. These hazard-specific guidelines will help you, in case of emergency, to be more aware of the risks associated with each particular situation. Basic facts about many hazards may be found on several different websites, including, [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org), [www.fema.gov](http://www.fema.gov), and [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov).

Include in this section of your disaster plan:

- Completed community risk assessment
- Informational sheets about relevant hazards
- Hazard-specific procedures, when applicable

### Section 2G: First-Aid Information

Basic first aid information such as infant, child, and adult CPR, control of bleeding, and care of injured extremities may be an important reference during an emergency. Your site may already have some basic first aid information available; if not, check with the Red Cross. First aid instructions should be included in the disaster plan and several staff members should also be certified in CPR and first aid. Skills should be reviewed on an ongoing basis and certifications should be kept current. Include in your disaster plan:

- Basic first aid information sheets
- A list of who is trained in basic first aid, CPR, and any other type of emergency medical care (updated every 6 months or whenever there is significant staff turnover)
- An inventory of first aid supplies and location at each Head Start site (Suggestion: Check supplies every 6 months and link this to staff reviews of First Aid skills.)

## Part Three: Incident Recovery

One often-overlooked part of disaster management is post-event activity. Determining how you will reunite children with caregivers as well as how you will initiate organizational recovery will be key parts of your preparation. Examples of attendance and release logs can be found in the [Toolbox](#).

### Section 3A: Reuniting Children with Parents and Caregivers

One of the most important post-event responsibilities is reuniting parents and children. The best way to deal effectively with this situation is to plan ahead, so include in your disaster plan:

- Phone numbers of students and families (home and work) OR descriptions of where this information can be found
- Policies and procedures for reuniting children with parents and caregivers (See Section VI). These should include information on:
  - ☞ How parents will obtain information about their children
  - ☞ Who is allowed to pick up children from the site
  - ☞ Where the pick-up point will be located (designate both an on-site and off-site pick up location)
- Location and maps (if necessary) of primary and backup pick-up points
- Copy of information about to whom the child can be released
- Attendance forms
- Student Release forms

## Part Three: Incident Recovery

### Section 3B: Organizational Recovery

Head Start responsibilities do not end once the emergency or disaster has passed and families have been reunited. Post-event, there will be many recovery issues to face (see Section VI). The best way to deal with these issues effectively is to address them ahead of time in your disaster plan. These issues may include:

- √ Alternative classroom and administrative office locations
- √ Modified or alternate transportation routes
- √ Speaking with reporters
- √ Assessing building safety
- √ Clean up and repair
- √ Backup of data systems
- √ Addressing mental health issues
- √ Applying for financial aid or reimbursement

Record-keeping is fundamental to successfully dealing with many of these issues. Be sure to include all relevant forms and worksheets in your plan.

This section of your disaster plan should include:

- Policies and procedures for organizational recovery plans (Red Cross and FEMA websites have specific materials related to business recovery from disasters as well as mental health concerns, especially for children, following an emergency or disaster)
- Relevant insurance documents for hazard, fire, and liability coverage
- Record keeping forms to use in itemizing damage and losses
- Important phone numbers for the insurance company, regional and federal Head Start agencies, local emergency management office, etc.

## Conclusion

Implementing the plan that you will create includes three key elements:

1. **Communicating** policies, procedures, and other information in the plan to the appropriate individuals through education and training
2. **Practicing** the plan through drills and exercises
3. **Evaluating** and **revising** the plan on a regular basis

If you follow the prompts detailed in this chapter, your agency will be well on its way to implementing and maintaining an effective all-hazards disaster plan. As you go through the process, remember that every program and every site will have its own unique set of needs and characteristics. The preceding guidelines are just that—be willing to think “outside the box” and brainstorm with key personnel to determine the best way to make use of your agency’s strengths.