



# IRAA School Emergency Preparedness

A Project of the Western Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council

## IRAA Emergency Preparedness Resources

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## National Models: Review

One of the most critical issues to consider in planning and assessment of regional emergency preparedness is to address the needs of Individuals Requiring Additional Assistance (IRAA). IRAA include, but are not limited to, the following: persons with disabilities, non-English speakers, individuals with serious chronic health problems, individuals with mental illness, elderly persons, children, homeless individuals and families, residents of nursing facilities and other residential care facilities, those with limited or no access to media and technology, and low-income persons.

Local, state and federal officials recognize the critical importance of emergency planning for special needs populations within each community. Children have been considered a “high-risk population” that requires additional assistance during emergencies and disasters since the inception of organized emergency preparedness planning. Schools became the focal point of systemic emergency preparedness planning following the tragic events at Columbine High School (April 20, 1999). School-based disastrous events prompted policy makers and educators, parents/guardians, students and community based organizations to develop broad systemic emergency preparedness awareness, training and guidance for public schools.

### PLANNING FOR IRAA STUDENTS, FACULTY & STAFF

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Numerous resources are available for school-based emergency preparedness from multiple disciplines including federal, state and local emergency management along with public safety agencies, academia, and public health preparedness. However, preparedness planning, recovery and response for IRAA students and faculty have received little specific focus.

For example, *Practical Information on Crisis Planning a Guide for Schools*, published by Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools, U.S. Department of Education, January 2007, is a comprehensive 132-page document that has only two pages (6-30, 6-31) addressing, “Consideration of special needs staff and students,” excerpted as follows:

- “Be sure to give special consideration to the unique needs of staff and students with disabilities when developing the crisis plan. Evacuation and relocation procedures will need to address mental, physical, motor, develop- mental, and sensory limitations. For example, individuals who use wheelchairs or other auxiliary aids will not be able to traverse the front steps of a building without substantial assistance. The following issues should be addressed: In some cases, individuals with disabilities may have limited mobility. In an evacuation there may not be enough time to move mobility impaired

students and staff to traditional shelters. It is important to identify alternative, accessible, safe shelter locations and to communicate these locations to emergency responders. Individuals with hearing disabilities may not be able to communicate verbally, to read lips, or to hear fire alarms or other emergency signals. Consider providing basic sign language training to designated school staff. Visual impairments might impede reading signs or traversing unfamiliar or altered terrain - consider whether debris might obstruct the evacuation of such staff and students and necessitate alternative shelter locations. Debris may obstruct the evacuation of individuals with mobility impairments.”

- “Be sure to assign sufficient staff to assist these individuals during a crisis or consider identifying alternative shelter locations. Is staff trained to assist students with developmental disabilities? These students may become upset if routine patterns of activity are disrupted. Do any students or staff have special needs for medicines, power supplies, or medical devices that are not likely to be available in emergency shelters? Consider what alternative arrangements can be made to provide these necessities. In addition to addressing these concerns, find out whether specific crises will require additional considerations for hazards, such as fire, severe weather, or earth- quake. For example, mobility impairments might prevent some staff or students from being able to bend over to assume the protective position recommended during tornadoes. Also, during a fire, elevators will be unavailable to transport wheelchairs. As noted earlier, it is critical to identify safe and appropriate shelter areas inside school buildings that can be reached quickly and accommodate individuals with disabilities.”

In summary, best practices guides and resources are readily available in the form of emergency preparedness materials for children in disasters, school-based emergency preparedness for general populations, training for stakeholders regarding unique needs of children in disasters and widely accepted view that children constitute a major special needs population.

## CHILDREN IN DISASTERS: GUIDANCE

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The following is an excerpt from the *Children in Disasters FEMA Guidance* (FFY 2010):

### A. Children in Disasters Background and Mission

Specific planning guidance on children is addressed in FEMA’s *Interim Emergency Management Planning Guide for Special Needs Populations: Comprehensive Planning Guide 301*. Children are considered as a population among “at risk,” “vulnerable” or “special needs” populations; children under the age of 18 comprise nearly 25 percent of the U.S. population and have important and often complex planning and emergency response needs. Congress established the National Commission on Children and Disasters in 2008 to

identify gaps in capabilities to meet the unique needs of children in Federal, State and local emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery activities. The FY10 HSPG guidance includes specific language on children, with the objective of establishing a focused national effort to close the gap in planning and response deficiencies and ensure specific entities in communities that provide care for children, such as schools, child care facilities, child welfare and juvenile justice systems, are integrated into State and local disaster planning and exercising.

Children have unique needs that must be addressed in emergency preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery operations. For example:

- Children require different dosages of medications and different forms of medical and mental health interventions than those used by adults.
- Decontamination of children is more time and resource intensive than adults.
- Children's developmental and cognitive levels may impede their ability to escape danger. Young children may not be able to communicate enough information to be identified and reunited with parents or caregivers.
- Children may experience increased psychological effects as they may have difficulty comprehending disasters within the context of normal every day events. This may leave children unable to cope long after disasters and result in later consequences including depression, lack of focus and poor school performance.
- Children have specialized care requirements and equipment that limit the number of hospital facilities that may be prepared to handle an influx of pediatric disaster victims.
- Critically sick or injured children may have specialized transportation needs.
- Children's safety in a disaster and their individual recovery is dependent on the preparedness, response and recovery capabilities and resources of a network of institutions, including schools, child care providers and other congregate care settings.

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate announced the creation of an internal "Children's Working Group" in August 2009, which will explore and implement planning and response strategies specific to children throughout DHS and ensure that the unique needs of children are not only considered, but fully integrated into FEMA's emergency preparedness and response operations and activities. This emphasis aligns with the *Interim Report* recommendations of the National Commission on Children and Disasters found at: <http://www.childrenanddisasters.acf.hhs.gov>.

## IRAA SCHOOL POPULATIONS: RECOMMENDED ASSESSMENTS

Within this overall framework on emergency preparedness for children, there seems to be a vacuum of literature for individualized emergency preparedness guidance for special education students and IRAA school-based populations. Assessment of the following categories is needed to develop effective individualized school emergency preparedness protocols:

- Medical/Physical Needs
- Emotional/Behavioral Needs
- Cognitive/Developmental Needs
- Transportation Needs
- Communication Needs
- Communication process among faculty, aides and administration, students and caregivers
- Inclusion of IRAA school emergency preparedness in comprehensive school emergency planning, recovery, response, mitigation and training.

Review and assessment of national “best practices” has led to compilation of a list of resources for this project as presented in the following sections.

# Best Practices: Resources

## NATIONAL - GENERAL RESOURCES

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- American Academy of Pediatrics  
<http://www.aap.org/family/frk/frkit.htm>
- American Red Cross (ARC)  
<http://www.redcross.org>
- Center for Disease Control (CDC)  
<http://www.pandemicflu.gov>
- Discovery Education  
<http://readyclassroom.discoveryeducation.com/media/pdfs/SCHOOL-EMERGENCY-SUPPLIES-GO-KIT.pdf>
- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)  
<http://www.fema.gov/areyouready>
- Free Online Hurricane Planning  
[www.onestorm.org](http://www.onestorm.org)
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network  
<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel>
- National Homeland Security  
<http://www.ready.gov>
- National Response Framework  
<http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/mainindex.htm>
- One Million Safe Schools and Hospital Campaign  
<http://www.safe-schools-hospitals.net/en/Home.aspx>
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
Center for Mental Health Services  
*Mental Health All-Hazards Disaster Planning Guidance*  
<http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA03-3829/SMA03-3829.pdf>

## NATIONAL - DISABILITY RESOURCES

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- Accommodating People with Disabilities in Disasters  
<http://www.fema.gov/oer/reference/>
- American Association of People with Disabilities  
[http://www.aapd-dc.org/News/emergency/index\\_emergprep.php](http://www.aapd-dc.org/News/emergency/index_emergprep.php)
- Disability Info: The New Freedom Initiative's Online Resource for Americans with Disabilities  
<http://www.disabilityinfo.gov/>
- English Language Proficiency, Family Economic Security and Child Development  
<http://nccp.org/publications/show.php?id=948>
- Interagency Coordination Council of Emergency Preparedness and Individuals with Disabilities  
<http://www.disabilitypreparedness.gov/>
- National Council on Disability  
[http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2005/saving\\_lives.htm](http://www.ncd.gov/newsroom/publications/2005/saving_lives.htm)
- National Organization on Disability (NOD)  
<http://www.nod.org/emergency>
- Nobody Left Behind  
<http://www.nobodyleftbehind2.org/~rrtcpbs/resources/>

## DISABILITY - SPECIFIC RESOURCES

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- *Children with Disabilities/Complex Medical Needs*  
Administration for Children & Families  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/add/resources/dispub.html>  
  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
<http://www.aap.org/advocacy/emergprep.htm>
- *Individuals Deaf or Hard of Hearing*  
Community Emergency Preparedness Information Network (CEPIN)  
[www.cepintdi.org](http://www.cepintdi.org)
- *Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities and their Families*  
University of Connecticut, A.J. Papanikou UCEDD  
<http://www.uconnucedd.org/disasterpreparedness.html>



STATE AND LOCAL RESOURCES

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- Disability Law Center – Special Education Resources  
<http://dlc-ma.org/Resources/education.htm>
- Disability Policy Consortium  
<http://www.dpcma.org/EmergencyPreparedness/tabid/468/Default.aspx>
- E.K. Shriver Center – UMass Medical School  
<http://www.umassmed.edu/shriver/news/eptraining.aspx>
- Harvard School for Public Health, Center for Public Health Preparedness  
<http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/hcphp>
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary & Secondary Education, Education Laws and Regulations, 603 CMR 23.00 Student Records, 23.05: Privacy and Security of Student Records  
<http://www.doe.mass.edu/lawsregs/603cmr23.html?section=05>
- Massachusetts Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)  
*This document provides an overview of DMR's planning, response and recovery plans if and when there is an emergency that impacts the individuals they support.*  
[http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2terminal&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Provider&L2=Guidelines%2Band%2BResources&L3=Guidelines%2Bfor%2BServices%2B&%2BPlanning&L4=Emergency%2BPreparedness%2Band%2BPlanning&sid=Eeohhs2&b=terminalcontent&f=dmr\\_p\\_coop\\_plan&csid=Eeohhs2](http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eohhs2terminal&L=5&L0=Home&L1=Provider&L2=Guidelines%2Band%2BResources&L3=Guidelines%2Bfor%2BServices%2B&%2BPlanning&L4=Emergency%2BPreparedness%2Band%2BPlanning&sid=Eeohhs2&b=terminalcontent&f=dmr_p_coop_plan&csid=Eeohhs2)
- Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH)  
<http://www.mass.gov/dph/topics/bioterrorism/bt.htm>
- Massachusetts Disaster Support  
<http://www.mass.gov/samh/>
- Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency  
<http://www.mass.gov/mema>