



IMPROVING YOUR EMERGENCY AND DISASTER RESILIENCE

Tabletop Activity for Resource & Referral Agencies

County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health
Emergency Preparedness and Response Program



Improving Your Emergency and Disaster Resilience

Community disaster resilience is the capacity of a community as a whole to prepare for, respond to, and recover from disasters and emergencies.

Strategies to achieve community resilience include:

- Assessing and addressing community vulnerabilities, gaps and needs
- Developing community partnerships
- Provide training, education, and engagement
- Building on the strengths, resources and the support of others
- Planning for a wide range of emergencies and disasters

All emergencies and disasters have consequences for the physical, economic, and emotional health of the community and will impact the children and families you serve. There are many uncertainties but also opportunities to prepare and build upon all of the resources and plans you already have in place.

A tabletop activity is a simulated (not-real) crisis, disaster or emergency situation to help groups to assess their level of preparedness and discuss strategies for improvement. During the activity a scenario is presented and participants discuss what the response would be.

The activity is intended to provide an informal and low-stress environment to review current plans, clarify emergency roles and responsibilities, and identify gaps in planning, response and recovery.

The scenario will have four phases, after each phase questions from the following four categories are posed for discussion.

1. **Partnership:** Partnerships with others in your community that can support and assist your agency during a disaster or emergency.
2. **Engagement:** Activities and strategies that will assess the need and gaps, strengths and resources of providers (and other R&Rs), and the children and families they serve. Activities and strategies to provide information, education and resources before, during or after a disaster or emergency.
3. **Education:** Materials, training and other activities to meet the education and information needs of providers and the families and children they serve before, during, and after a disaster or emergency.
4. **Self-sufficiency:** Emergency readiness of the R&R and capacity to continue to provide services and support to providers during a disaster or emergency. Includes information to media, first responders, families and providers.

After the tabletop scenarios are completed a brief self-assessment section is available for your agency to score the current level of preparedness.

The following tabletop scenario contains an evolving heat wave. Sample strategies for action, questions for your agency to consider during planning, and resources are listed at the end of this document.

Heat Scenario

Phase One: There is an end of summer heat wave where temperatures extend beyond 100 degrees for more than one week. Not all providers have air conditioning and both children and providers are having difficulty staying cool and focusing. Staff who are assigned to do site visits to providers are also being challenged by the heat.



Discussion Questions:

1. **Partnership:** What local partnerships should be put in place including local government, non-profit business, health and responder agencies to make sure you and the providers you serve are ready for this heat increase? Are there cooling centers you can refer providers or families to after hours or on weekends?
2. **Engagement:** How will you identify how staff, providers, children and families are being impacted by heat? What strategies do you have for communication and sharing information? What can you do to accommodate staff who are challenged by the heat?
3. **Education:** Are there education materials available for staff and providers to help prevent heat related illness and exhaustion for themselves and children? Will families be provided with information? How will information be shared? Will you provide training? Do you and your providers have information and resources to keep indoor and outdoor areas cool? Do current documents about facility safety include this information?
4. **Self-sufficiency:** How would periods of extreme heat effect any services you provide to clients? Are providers able to stay open during this heat wave? If providers are unable to stay open, how would you respond? Would you make changes on how you do business?

Phase Two: Temperatures continue to rise for a third week. Children still cannot play outside during regular times and are getting restless and agitated. There have been rolling black-outs of electricity, so that some child care providers are losing electricity which has impacted refrigeration and air conditioning. Parents, staff and children are also more agitated and tired from the heat. The community overall is becoming frustrated with a lack of government response or support for the power outages. Additionally, there have been fires in neighboring counties leading to poor air quality.



Discussion Questions:

1. **Partnership:** Are there other partners that could help with the impact of the heat and power outages? Who is the R&R connected with to receive ongoing information and resources?
2. **Engagement:** How will you know if children are being affected by the air quality, which providers lack refrigeration and have issues with keeping food at safe temperatures, and who might be located near any fires? Would you be able to provide updates to families regarding air quality and power outages?
3. **Education:** How would your agency convey information to providers about food safety, air quality and evacuation warnings related to the fires? Would you be able to provide training and resources? Do providers know how to respond to children who are affected by the air quality?
4. **Self-sufficiency:** Are agencies and providers able to help each other with air conditioning or refrigeration? Are there other alternative locations for child care available if needed?

Phase Three: The extreme heat continues off and on for several weeks. A small child who was left in a car has died and there are reports of an increase in children and seniors reporting to hospital emergency rooms with heat-related conditions. Parents are upset and stressed about the death and are voicing their concern for the well-being of their children and in some cases are keeping children home.



Discussion Questions:

1. **Partnership:** Are your partners or others in your community who can, able to help R&R's and providers respond to and cope with the emotional stress from this tragedy?
2. **Engagement:** Are you able to engage providers about the impact and needs expressed by families? Are there additional groups you are communicating with to provide information and seek resources?
3. **Education:** How would your agency respond to this tragedy? Are there any resources for mental health/emotional support and injury prevention for families and providers? Are there educational materials available for distribution that would provide information to help prevent similar deaths, injury, and illness?
4. **Self-sufficiency:** How would your agency respond to the stress and concern expressed by families in your community? Can your agency provide the needed training, education, and communications necessary to keep clients confident and secure? Can your agency respond to media inquiries?

Phase Four: Temperatures have returned to normal. A large center-based provider has partnered with public health and developed an education curriculum related to heat that addresses the needs and risks of small children. They are requesting support from the R&R to share this information.



Discussion Questions:

1. **Partnership:** Are the partners or networks able to help with the implementation of this curriculum?
2. **Engagement:** Are there additional groups you are communicating with to provide information and seek resources?
3. **Education:** What could your agency do to support this effort?
4. **Self-sufficiency:** Can your agency and providers identify and build on the lessons learned from the heat event to prepare for the next season and for other emergencies or disasters?

Agency Self-Assessment

The tabletop activity is not a test but a tool to assess your level of preparedness. The scores are meant to help your agency determine its strengths, gaps and next steps for improvement. No one, or agency is ever completely prepared so there is not a perfect score only opportunities for discussion, partnership, and additional planning. If you complete this tabletop annually you can compare your scores over time.

PARTNERSHIP	#	Which of the answers below best describes your agency?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you have partnerships in place and well specified plans? • Were you able to count on those partnerships as the scenario changed? 		<p>1 = Very few or no partners that were needed in response were in place; no clear understanding of what each partner organization would contribute</p> <p>2 = A small number of partnerships established, but a few key ones are still not in place; some organizations know what to do, but most do not</p> <p>3 = The main partnerships are established, some roles and responsibilities are clear, but have not worked together to coordinate, plan and prepare in depth</p> <p>4 = All the right partnerships are in place, have met to discuss and plan, most roles and responsibilities are clear with some areas for improvement</p>
ENGAGEMENT	#	Which of the answers below best describes your agency?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the needs of staff, providers, children and families included in plans for engagement, discussions, and well represented? • Were you able to specify what help these groups would need? • As conditions worsened, changed, and unfolded were there strategies to assess their status? 		<p>1 = No plans for engagement are in place</p> <p>2 = Those that would be affected by the event can be identified but are not represented in planning</p> <p>3 = Some plans/strategies for engagement are in place but not for all groups</p> <p>4 = Representatives from all of the groups are integrated in the strategies for engagement</p>
EDUCATION	#	Which of the answers below best describes your agency?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you have an education plan to reach all the above groups? • Did you have resources to implement training and provide resources as conditions changed? • Did the education help maintain calm, provide updates, as well as, precautions, etc.? 		<p>1 = Education plan and materials/curriculum related to emergencies or disasters are either not existent or limited in scope or detail</p> <p>2 = Education and training materials exist but has incorrect or missing information about the emergency, no real dissemination plan or resources for training</p> <p>3 = Education plan is clear and appropriate, disseminations plan is in place, but not fully linked to the groups</p> <p>4 = Plan is in place for education, training and distribution of resources across groups</p>
SELF-SUFFICIENCY	#	Which of the answers below best describes your agency?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is your agency confident in the ability to continue to provide services, support providers and families? • Did you have additional challenges with providing support and services as conditions changed? 		<p>1 = Your agency has no plans for reliance on internal networks (all focused on getting external support)</p> <p>2 = Your agency has some plans to maintain services but none for providers</p> <p>3 = Your agency has capacity and plans to maintain services and support providers; including needs related to, anxiety-fear, stress and emotional support, but have not really stressed or tested those plans with media channels</p> <p>4 = Your agency has action or response plans and has tested them with providers, media, and first responder channels</p>

Agency Self-Assessment: Strengthening Your Plan

Review your scores, any discussion notes, and consider the following:

- ✓ What are the strengths in your agency's emergency plans?
- ✓ What are the biggest gaps or challenges?
- ✓ What areas are the biggest priority?
- ✓ What activities will your agency do first?
- ✓ What, partnerships, resources and support does your agency need to improve its emergency planning and resilience?

Sample Strategies for Action

The following strategies were suggested by other R&R and providers in Los Angeles County during a similar tabletop activity.

HEAT

- Direct families to cooling centers and important information (e.g., signs and symptoms of heat illness)
- Distribute fact sheets about what to do to keep cool during a heat wave and about air quality
- Direct people to information about preventing asthma attacks during times of poor air quality



GENERAL

- Share results of the tabletop activity with other providers
- Conduct practice drills
- Provide training on emergency preparedness for child care staff and providers
- Have training and coaching to help providers deal with trauma and stress they may have experienced during an emergency event
- Have training and coaching to help providers recognize when children have been affected by an emergency event and provide practical support
- Provide training in all languages for clients and providers
- R&R's can support each other with shared space and exchange of support staff as needed based on circumstances of the event and impacts to the facility
- Encourage child care providers to meet with local government to discuss their needs, gain information on available services and resources
- Establish an intake and referral process to support parents and first responders looking for child care during emergencies or disasters
- Establish a chain of communication with executive team members and facilities
- Set-up a system to keep parents informed during emergency situations
- Start a staff and community message board at the local park or local facility
- Encourage parents to sign-up to receive alerts about changes in weather or air quality

- Develop a resource list for child care providers and parents including information about mental health support or counseling
- Connect with amateur radio operators, (they don't have to be disaster specific; most cities have radio clubs)
- Set-up an alternate communication method to use during an emergency (e.g., nixle.com, mailchimp.com, call-em-all.com, facebook.com, twitter.com)
- Have community partners in place who can support providers and families (e.g., faith-based and mental health)

Resources

NATIONAL

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (information available in English & Spanish)

<http://www.cdc.gov/>

Stay Cool, Stay Hydrated, Stay Informed

<http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/>

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/index.asp>

Symptoms of Heat Related Illness

<http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/warning.html>

<http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/children.html>

Protect People in Your Care during Extreme Heat

<http://www.cdc.gov/extremeheat/emails/caretaker.html>

Tips for Preventing Heat-Related Illness

<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/heattips.asp>

Air Quality and Outdoor Activity Guidance for Schools

http://www.cdc.gov/nceh/airpollution/airquality/pdfs/Air_Quality_and_Outdoor_Activity_Guidance.pdf

Check Your Air Quality

<http://www.airnow.gov/index.cfm?action=student.main>

Child Care Aware

<http://childcareaware.org/>

U.S. National Library of Medicine, Medline Plus (information available in English & Spanish)
Signs and Symptoms of Heat Illness
<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/heatillness.html>

Peaceful Playgrounds
<http://www.peacefulplaygrounds.com/keeping-kids-cool-at-school/>

STATE

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov>

Be Prepared California Extreme Heat & Climate Change
<http://www.bepreparedcalifornia.ca.gov/beinformed/naturaldisasters/extremeheat/Pages/ExtremeHeat.aspx>

LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Department of Public Health, Los Angeles County
Emergency Preparedness and Response Program (information available in English & Spanish)
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/eprp/index.htm>
<http://www.bereadyla.org/>

Community Disaster Resilience
<http://www.laresilience.org/>

Disaster Resilience First Aid: A Community Approach to Providing Support and Resources
<http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/hea/library/topics/eprp/>

Cooling Centers in L.A. (2015)
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/docs/cooling-center.pdf>

Department of Mental Health, Los Angeles County
Manage Your Stress
Access Center 24/7 Helpline: (800) 854-7771
<http://dmh.lacounty.gov>

Climate Resolve
<http://climateresolve.org/>

For More Information Contact

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Acknowledgements

This tabletop was developed in collaboration with RAND Corporation
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Sample strategies were provided by Child Care Resource Center (CCRC)
<http://www.ccrcca.org/>