

Follow these steps to help you prepare for an emergency or disaster with your child's special health care needs or disability in mind.

CREATE A PLAN

The first step to creating an emergency plan is to sit down and talk with your family about different types of emergencies, how to prepare for them, and brainstorm ideas of how to care for your child with special needs during an emergency.

1. Assess your situation

Reflect and plan for your child's needs if there was:

- No water, electricity, telephone, heat, air conditioning, or refrigeration
- No local access to prescription refills or health products
- Separation from family members
- Inability to leave your home or need for evacuation
- Limited health care access and emergency rescue services
- A lack of transportation

2. Start Planning

- Plan for backup sources of heat, refrigeration, and electricity.
- You can use a Red Cross shelter for storing medicine, charging equipment and getting meals. You do not have to be staying in a shelter to use its resources.
- If your child depends on dialysis or other life sustaining treatment, know the location of more than one facility: find out the facility's plans for emergencies and how your child will get treatment, medications, etc. Get their emergency contact numbers.
- Create and practice an escape plan for your home.
- Be sure there are clear exit paths for a child who uses mobility devices or has vision loss.
- Talk to your local police and fire departments to see if they have emergency services or plans for people with special needs.
- Obtain a medical alert and/or identification bracelet for your child.
- Ask for the emergency plan at your child's school or child care. Plan with them how your child will get the care they need in an emergency.

3. Create a support network

Create a network of family, neighbors or friends that can help you and your child.

- Tell them about your child's special needs and share your emergency plan and where your emergency supplies are stored.
- Give a trusted member of your network a key to your home.
- Agree upon a system with your network to signal for help if phones, electricity and internet/networks are not working.
- Show others how to handle your child's wheelchair or other equipment.

Pack an Emergency Supply Kit

In addition to supplies needed for a general disaster kit, you may need to add several things to the kit for your child with special needs.

General Information and Supplies:

- A current copy of your child's Care Plan, including an In Case of Emergency Form.
- Current medical information and records stored on a CD, flash drive, or phone app (keep one paper copy in a waterproof bag).
- Batteries for hearing aids and communication devices.
- Special dietary foods and supplies.
- Items that calm or entertain your child.
- Identification to be carried by each child in case your family gets separated.

Power Supplies:

- A generator for back up power support (due to deadly fumes, **never** use a generator indoors).
- An AC adaptor for your car to charge small electrical equipment such as a nebulizer.
- Battery powered versions of medical equipment your child uses.
- Manual wheelchair or other non-electric equipment.
- Backup chargers a cell phones. This include a hand-cranked USB cell phone emergency charger, a solar charger, or a battery pack. Some weather radios have a built in hand crank charger.
- Backup chargers for a laptop or tablet could include a 12V USB adapter that plugs into a car, an inverter, or a battery jump pack with a USB port.

Medical Supplies and Medications:

- Talk with your child's doctor about how to get an emergency supply of medicines. If your child takes medicine given by a clinic or hospital, talk with them about how to plan for a stoppage due to a disaster.
- Ask your pharmacist how long the medicine can last and storage needs of the medicines.
- Keep a two-week supply of medical care items such as needles, nasal cannulas, bandages, etc.
- Keep a cooler and chemical ice packs for storing medications that must be kept cold.
- Keep prescription information in your wallet, survival kit and car that includes the name, location and phone number of an out of town pharmacy.

Other Helpful Tips:

- Pack smaller "to go" kits for use in an evacuation. Store them in multiple places such as your car, at work and at school.
- Update supplies yearly, replace water every six months, and update emergency contact and medical forms as needed.
- If you can't contact your doctor or pharmacy in a disaster, ask for help from emergency responders or staff at emergency shelters or service centers. You can get help in getting medication from a Red Cross shelter or by dialing 211 for information on disaster and human services in Pennsylvania.

Resources

General Emergency Preparedness Information: <https://www.ready.gov/individuals-access-functional-needs>

Emergency Plan for Individuals With Disabilities and Others with Access and Functional Needs: <https://www.temple.edu/instituteondisabilities/programs/eprep/docs/EmergencyPlanForm2015-07.pdf>

Disaster Preparedness Checklist for Children With Special Nutritional Needs: <http://depts.washington.edu/cshcnut/download/resources/disasterchecklist.pdf>

Information About Individuals with Special Needs that can be provided to emergency responders: <https://cshcn.org/pdf/getting-to-know-me.pdf>