

**THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS**  
*Department of Early Education and Care*

**Family Child Care**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: EMERGENCY PLANNING**

[See 102 CMR 8.09(2)(a)]

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Family child care regulations require that providers have a written plan detailing procedures for addressing potential emergencies. The plan must address a variety of emergencies including loss of power, heat or water, fire or natural disaster, and must meet the needs of all children in care.

Some emergencies may require evacuation of the child care home. In other situations it may be best to take shelter within the family child care home until the emergency is resolved. Some situations may involve only the family child care home itself; others may include the neighborhood or immediate area. No matter what the circumstances, planning ahead and practice will help children and adults remain as safe as possible when an emergency occurs.

Map Your Evacuation Route.

Draw a floor plan of your home, marking all exits and the routes to the exits from the child care space. Consider what furniture or equipment children would have to move around to get to the exits. Think about places where frightened children might try to hide in an emergency, such as closets, beds, etc. Keep a working flashlight available at all times. Talk with your local Fire Department and ask them for advice on evacuation routes.

Identify an Alternative Location.

Consider where you will go if you evacuate, and how you will get there. Choose a meeting place outside your home but on the premises. Identify another location where you will go until the children's parents can pick them up. Consider what resources are available in your neighborhood. Public buildings may be useful if open during all child care hours. Seek permission of proper authorities, and make sure there is a safe, comfortable space for the children there. Identify another location further away, outside of your neighborhood, in the event that the emergency is more widespread. And find out from emergency personnel where the local meeting place is in the event of a major evacuation that includes an entire town, city or geographic area.

Make an Evacuation Plan

Determine whether you will have your own vehicle(s) available to transport the children to an emergency location, or whether you will need assistance from emergency vehicles. If you must evacuate the family child care home, you should be prepared to take with you emergency contact information for all children, emergency medical treatment consent forms, special medications needed by the children, and first aid supplies. You may want to have a "disaster kit" prepared that you can quickly retrieve and take with you containing all the necessary

information, and another with toys and activity plans to occupy the children. If you have an assistant in your family child care program, determine who will be responsible for which tasks in an emergency. Count the children before you leave the home, count them again once outside, and count them when you get to your destination. Determine whether a telephone will be available at your destination for your use in notifying parents, or whether you will have a cellular telephone. Document when the children are picked up and by whom.

#### Prepare for Sheltering in Place

In some emergency situations it may be safer to remain in the child care home until the emergency has ended. In that case, consider whether you have emergency supplies of food, blankets, flashlights, and other necessities to keep yourself and the children in your care comfortable. You may want to set aside special activities that the children can do to keep entertained and occupied until the situation resolves. In the event of a tornado, be prepared to move to an interior area of the home, away from windows, such as a basement or interior hallway. Know where and how to shut off electricity, gas and water service in the event of an earthquake. Plan ahead for alternative water sources such as bottled water in the event of water loss.

#### Practice Your Plan.

Practice is necessary to ensure that your emergency plan works, that everyone understands what to do, and to avoid panic and uncertainty in the event of a real emergency. Children need not be frightened if you explain that emergency drills are a way to be sure that you and they will be safe “just in case” of an emergency.

#### Share Your Plan With Parents.

Make sure parents know where your alternative locations are in the event of an emergency evacuation. Make sure they have the telephone number of the facility where you will be sheltering, or a cellular phone number to reach you, if that is part of your plan.

#### Keep Your Plan Current.

Review your plan periodically to see if it needs updating. Rearranging furniture may require a change in evacuation routes. If your alternative location is torn down, sold, closed, or under new management, you may need to make other arrangements. If your cellular phone number changes, make sure parents have that information. Be sure parents are each given a copy of your revised plan each time it changes.

#### More Information Is Available.

Your local fire department and emergency personnel may have additional information for you. In addition there is more detailed information available in a paper called “Planning for Disasters In Child Care”. The paper includes a list of resources available through the internet with information on everything from bio-terrorism through severe weather.