



Child Care Licensing Fact Sheet

Operating a Child Care Program Following a Declared Emergency: Guidelines for Department of Children and Families (DCF) Staff and Child Care Providers



Within 24 hours after a declared emergency (hurricane, forest fire, or other natural disaster), the Florida Administrative Code requires the owner, operator, or director of a child care facility or home (licensed, large, or registered) to **notify your licensing authority** about the status of operation in order to ensure that health and safety standards are met.

Once the surrounding area has been cleared for access by the Emergency Management Team...

A child care facility or home **will** be able to re-open/remain open if:

- ✓ It has NO structural damage, **AND**
- ✓ It has FULL electrical service, **AND**
- ✓ The water and sewage/septic tank are working properly.

A child care facility or home **may** be able to re-open/remain open (based on a case-by-case assessment by the Department) if:

- ✓ It has NO structural damage, **AND**
- ✓ The water and sewage/septic tank are working properly, **AND**
- ✓ It is without electricity, **BUT** lighting needs are being met using either batteries or a generator. Under NO circumstances are candles, open flames, gas or fuel lanterns to be used.

Please Note: A child care facility or home that chooses to operate using an alternate power source, such as a generator, must be permanently installed and maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations and comply with the Florida Building Code and the Florida Fire Prevention Code 69A-60, F.A.C. The alternate power source and fuel supply shall be in an area that is not subject to flooding or damage from storm surge. Additionally, if the generator is gas powered, the child care facility/home must install and maintain a carbon monoxide detector.

If the child care facility or home SUSTAINS STRUCTURAL DAMAGE, an on-site inspection is required **PRIOR** to caring for children if repairs are incomplete. Licensing staff must ensure that the structure is sound, and no live wires or open access to sewage exists, etc. DCF staff may accomplish these inspections in collaboration with other departments or agencies.

If children are to be moved to alternate sites, child care providers are responsible for notifying your licensing authority for confirmation that the site is appropriate, as well as informing the parents. Both licensing staff and the provider should work with their local Resource and Referral agency to help get the message out, to confirm location changes, and to ensure all children are provided care in a healthy and safe environment.

Each and every situation must be assessed on an individual basis and determinations made based on protecting the health, safety and well-being of the children in care.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER DURING A RECOVERY PERIOD:

- ✓ Consultation with or alerts from the local health department are critical regarding water safety. Contamination may occur and may require the following: water used for drinking/cooking must be purchased (i.e. bottled water); water used for hand-washing and cleaning must be vigorously boiled for five minutes and cooled or have 8 drops of bleach added to each gallon of water and sit for 30 minutes before use.
- ✓ Provisions must be made for the facility/home to be kept cool and comfortable when children are in care. Fans may be appropriate; however, they must have safety features and kept out of the reach of children.
- ✓ If flooding has occurred within the facility/home, clean up must occur before allowing children in care, including the disposal or sanitization of any toys and equipment impacted by the water.
- ✓ Consultation with the local health department is critical regarding sewage contamination and septic tank capacity, damage, and stress created by excessive rains, flooding, and standing water.
- ✓ Outdoor areas must be safe for play and free from debris. Do not allow children to play near downed power lines or flooded areas. Programs may be allowed to reopen even if outdoor areas are not useable; however, approval by your licensing authority is required and children must be kept out of that play area completely or by setting up temporary fencing/barriers to prohibit access.
- ✓ For food preparation in the absence of electrical power, pre-packaged foods that do not require refrigeration should be used and made available. Consult with your local health department on alternate meal planning and safe storage of foods.
- ✓ Regardless of circumstances, staff-to-child ratios must be maintained to provide appropriate supervision particularly with these additional distractions.
- ✓ Children may be accepted on a temporary basis; however, the licensed capacity may NEVER be exceeded. Enrollment information is required and contact numbers are extremely critical. Complete medical record requirements may be waived by your local licensing authority temporarily until the emergency has passed.

IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION: The following agencies should be consulted and called upon for assistance during times of recovery: (please fill-in the appropriate telephone number for your area)

Child Care Licensing Contact: _____

Local Resource and Referral Agency (R&R): _____

Early Learning Coalition: _____

Local Health Department: _____

Local Fire Department: _____

USEFUL WEBSITES:

[DCF Child Care Emergency Preparedness](#) - provides a brief outline of child care provider's responsibilities related to emergency preparedness and reporting

[DCF Disaster Services](#) - provides office closures and other information for affected counties

[Department of Health](#) - provides information on drinking water safety and other health precautions

[Division of Emergency Management](#) - provides information on evacuations and closings and helpful planning tools

[Red Cross](#) - disaster preparedness tools for many types of disasters, storm tracking information, safety checklists and safety information

[FEMA](#) - information on different types of disasters, disaster and emergency declarations, and current response and recovery information



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