



State of South Carolina

Department of Social Services

Policies and Procedures: Child Welfare Services

Subject:	739 Child Welfare Services Disaster Response
Authority:	Title IVB,E; 42 U.S.C.A. § 622(b)(16)
Standards:	Guiding Principles and Standards (GPS) Practice Model
Application:	All Child Welfare Services Staff
Purpose:	
Disasters adversely impact communities, strain State resources, and overwhelm child welfare systems. The Department of Social Services (DSS) maintains preparedness for disasters as outlined in this policy and the DSS Child Welfare Services Disaster Plan to mitigate these adverse effects and reduce disruptions in the provision of services to children and families during a disaster. The response to new and continued provision of Child Welfare Services in areas adversely affected by or during a disaster is outlined in this policy. This policy supports the DSS Child Welfare Services Disaster Plan.	
Policy Statement:	
During and after a disaster, DSS shall identify, locate, and continue services for children in foster care who are displaced or adversely affected; respond, as appropriate, to new child protective services referrals in areas adversely affected, and provide appropriate services; remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced; prepare and preserve essential program records; and coordinate services and share information with other States. This policy and the DSS Child Welfare Services Disaster Plan promote achievement of these objectives.	
Policy Administration:	
The Child Welfare Services Safety Division is the owner of this policy. The director, or the director's designee, will review this policy at least annually from the date of publication in the Child Welfare Services Manual and will make any necessary amendments to improve its effectiveness.	
Procedures:	
A. Intake	1. Intake case managers are considered essential staff and will not be deployed for shelter coverage. 2. Intake team leaders and team coordinators must utilize their laptops to monitor intake referrals during disasters. 3. Intake Case Managers: a. In the event a disaster occurs and CAPSS is unavailable, intake case managers must answer the phone and gather information in accordance with agency policies governing the intake. Intake case managers will not delay answering intake calls due to waiting on CAPSS to become available again.

Subject: Disaster Response

	b. If CAPSS is unavailable, all information gathered during the intake call must be documented via DSS Form 3027: Offline Intake Form. c. Intake case managers shall assess the information utilizing the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Intake Tool and document SDM assessment information via DSS Form 3027: Offline Intake Form, and refer to Work Aid 2.1: Using the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Intake Screening and Response Tool for more information on using the SDM Intake Tool. d. Once the intake case manager has documented the intake information, the case manager sends DSS Form 3027: Offline Intake Form to their team leader via email for review and final decision approval. If email is unavailable, the case manager must call the team leader and receive a verbal consultation that will be followed by a team leader's signature on the offline intake form once they are able to send it. e. Following the team leader's decision, the intake case manager notifies counties of any intakes by phone call. 4. CAPSS: a. When CAPSS becomes available, intake case managers still on shift from the initial outage must enter any intakes in CAPSS taken while CAPSS was down. Following shifts must enter remaining intakes, as necessary. Intakes received during a CAPSS outage must begin being entered immediately upon the system becoming available. The timeframe to enter all intakes should not exceed the timeframe of the outage. Intake may utilize on-call staff to assist with intakes being entered timely. b. If the intake case manager entering the intake is different than the initial intake case manager who took the call, the intake is to be entered in the name of the case manager who is entering the information. The intake case manager who took the call is to be documented in the intake dictation. c. While entering the intake, the intake case manager shall review CAPSS history for open cases and document accordingly. d. The intake team leader completes the decision tab. Once the intake case manager has entered the other intake information, the case manager notifies the team leader who must complete the decision tab. 5. Intake Team Leaders: a. Once the intake case manager provides the DSS Form 3027: Offline Intake Form to the team leader, the team leader will document on the form approval or disapproval of the selections
--	--

Subject: Disaster Response

	made in Section H, including the time of their review and approval or disapproval. • If the team leader identifies needed screening changes, the team leader must document in Section H the changes the team leader would make and the time of review and approval. b. Once the team leader has reviewed and approved the decision, the team leader must send the intake form back to the intake case manager. c. Following CAPSS becoming available after an outage the current case manager on shift will enter any intakes take during system outage in CAPSS. The team leader assigns any intakes completed by the intake case manager no longer on shift to other case managers for entry in CAPSS. d. Team leaders shall maintain a list of intakes with the original decision times noted. e. The team leader shall complete the decision tab in CAPSS for all intakes listed using the information noted in dictation, and document in dictation the team lead completed the decision tab information for the original team leader. f. If the shift has changed and the team leader is no longer working, the team leader shall send the list of intakes to the team leader(s) for the next shift.
B. New Reports Received During a Disaster	1. During normal business and on call hours, Child Welfare Services staff shall continue with required responsibilities during a disaster and seek guidance from county leadership on appropriate steps. If initial contact is not reasonably possible or unsafe due to a disaster, case managers shall contact local law enforcement as needed to assist in conducting initial contact. Coordination with local law enforcement to assist should be coordinated on an as-needed basis. 2. If a case manager cannot make initial contact, the case manager shall document concerted efforts explaining the circumstances and collaborate with local law enforcement to make initial contact. 3. The case manager shall continue to attempt initial contact, following the guidance outlined in Work Aid 3.2: Concerted Efforts to Locate Families.
C. Existing or Ongoing Cases During a Disaster	1. Ongoing Cases a. Ongoing Contacts i. If face to face and virtual contact are not possible, the case manager will document the circumstances explaining why contact was unsuccessful, and the efforts made to make contact. The case manager shall seek additional guidance

	from county leadership on appropriate next steps during the disaster. ii. If a family relocates during a disaster to an area further than 60 miles from the county of origin, whether temporary or permanent, the county of origin may request assistance from the county in which the family is currently located. b. Service Referrals i. The case manager shall continue to make service referrals. However, is permissible to sequence service referrals to address the immediate needs first. ii. Immediate services include those required to maintain the safety of the child(ren). iii. If a service referral is identified, but the resource is unable to provide the service or the disaster prevents the family from completing the service, the case manager shall consult with the team leader for alternative service options and will document the circumstances explaining the service cannot be completed or an alternate service is being selected. 2. Documentation a. During a disaster, all casework activities shall be documented in the same manner as they would under non-disaster circumstances. • Refer to Work Aid 3.7: A Case Manager's Guide to Opening and Transitioning Cases for documentation requirements and timeframes regarding investigations. b. In the event CAPSS is unavailable, all documentation shall be typed or physically written on paper. i. If digital records are used, such as Microsoft Word, the case manager must create a folder for each assigned CWS case on their DSS issued computer within their OneDrive. ii. If physical records are used, the case manager will document all case records written on paper and stored in a file, per case, within a secure location, and records are not to be stored in the same file as records from another case. 3. The case manager shall consult with their team leader to determine the secure location in which these physical files will be stored, given the county's specific situation and the agency's security practices. 4. Once CAPSS becomes available, Child Welfare Services staff will document and link all documents completed offline during the disaster, including handwritten notes.
--	--

Subject: Disaster Response

D. Foster Care and Adoption	1. Foster Care Provider Disaster Plan Requirements a. All licensed group homes, foster homes, and adoptive homes are required per regulations and policy to have a documented disaster plan in place. This plan is required for initial licensure and for all renewals thereafter. Disaster plans are submitted to the provider's assigned licensing/adoptive consultant and are kept on file. Group homes submit a disaster plan to their licensing consultant and maintain DSS Form 1518: Disaster Preparedness Log to provide procedures in case of disaster. The disaster plan for foster and adoptive homes is documented via DSS Form 30246: Foster/Adoptive Family Disaster Plan and must include the following: i. Foster family contact information; ii. Name, address, and telephone number for first and second choice locations in which the family would evacuate to during a disaster; iii. Evacuation locations must be shelters approved by local emergency protective services, hotels, or a residence outside of the area of impact, and must meet the minimum standards of: • The location is safe and is large enough to accommodate everyone; • The location is far enough away as to not be threatened by the disaster; and • The residence is appropriate for the needs of the child(ren). This should consider the child(ren)'s medical needs, conditions, medications, and supplies. iv. Emergency contact information Note: When local shelters are used, the foster parents are to confirm the foster child(ren)'s name(s) are listed on an attendance roster. b. The Regional Foster Family Licensing and Support Coordinator (FSC) or adoption case manager shall review and monitor these plans for updates during annual licensing visits and at the time of license renewal. The plan shall include the following topics and considerations: i. Disaster preparedness plans will be responsive, flexible, appropriate to the situation and include, at a minimum, two locations to choose from. ii. Foster child(ren) must be evacuated when there is a mandatory evacuation order. iii. If the child(ren) are considered medically fragile, the plan must specify child's needs, conditions, medications, and supplies required in writing. In addition, the plan should reflect attendance at a regular shelter, a Special Medical Needs Shelter (accompanied by a caregiver), another facility or a home that can accommodate the child(ren)'s
------------------------------------	--

	special needs. (Refer to the county emergency plan for a listing of shelters to accommodate the medically fragile - if a listing is available). 2. Communication with foster providers during a disaster a. Prior to a disaster i. The licensing worker is responsible for ensuring the foster family provider understands how shelters can and should be utilized during a disaster. This includes identifying the shelter locations the family would utilize, if necessary. b. During and immediately following a disaster i. State level DSS foster home, group home, and licensing staff are required to be on call to assist in communication and relocation efforts for any displaced children. ii. If a disaster is anticipated, foster care and adoption case managers shall communicate with the foster families before the disaster to confirm the family's plans for evacuation and location during the disaster event. 1. When an evacuation has been issued, whether by the Governor or as determined necessary by DSS, the foster care and adoption case manager must assist the foster family in locating alternate placement for any foster children in the event the foster family refuses to evacuate. iii. If the disaster is sudden with no forewarning, the foster care or adoption case manager must communicate with the family as soon as the immediate disaster has subsided to confirm their location. 3. Following the immediate disaster, the foster care or adoption case manager shall communicate with foster or adoptive families and assess their safety in their residence or new location. a. If the foster family home is damaged, the foster care or adoption case manager must confirm if the home meets standards of care, fire, safety, and health/sanitation requirements. b. If the foster home is damaged beyond repair or habitation, the foster home license shall be amended to reflect the new address and home environment of the family's residence. The new residence must meet all licensing requirements. i. If the new home is in an area outside the original region, the license must be transferred to the appropriate regional office who will oversee the license amendment. ii. If a foster family temporarily relocates to another state because of an emergency, the state to which they are relocated must be notified and relocations State's personnel may be used to conduct an assist.
--	---

Subject: Disaster Response

	iii. If a foster family permanently relocates to another state, the case must be transferred to the state to which they are moving. • The foster care case manager must contact the new state to transfer the information. Please see the DSS Policy: Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) for more details. iv. If the family's new residence does not meet licensing requirements, or if the family refuses to comply with requirements, the licensing worker shall consult the Office of General Counsel to explore voluntary closure or adverse action, e.g. nonrenewal, license revocation, removal of foster children. v. The foster care case manager shall be included in decision making teams concerned with closure of a foster home or other adverse action.
E. Group Homes and Child Placing Agencies (CPA)	Group homes and child placing agencies shall email cpa-gh-disaster@dss.sc.gov or call the Disaster Hotline 1-800-700-1156 to notify DSS of evacuation plans and provide the location of children within their care. Available shelters can be located on South Carolina Emergency Division's website. 1. When evacuation occurs, group homes and child placing agencies must: a. Evacuate, if within a mandatory evacuation zone; b. Contact the DSS caseworker for each child within their care. 2. Within 24 hours of reaching the evacuation site and upon reaching safety: a. Group home staff shall complete a document or call the Disaster hotline detailing: i. Date of evacuation; ii. Name of each evacuating child; iii. County or office providing case management for each child; iv. Location and situation of each evacuating child; and v. Phone number and address of the location where group home staff and children can be found. b. Child Placing Agencies will communicate directly with CPA licensed families to obtain details regarding family placement to collect data for DSS in the form of a spreadsheet. 3. Upon Safe Return a. Group home staff shall email cpa-gh-disaster@dss.sc.gov or call the Disaster Hotline 1-800-700-1156 with the list of children who have returned with them.

Subject: Disaster Response

	b. Child placing agencies shall email cpa-gh-disaster@dss.sc.gov or call the Disaster Hotline to provide the names of both foster parents and foster children who have safely returned.
--	---

Forms:	DSS Form 30246 Foster/Adoptive Family Disaster Plan DSS Form 30199 Disaster Preparedness for Foster and Adoptive Parents DSS Form 3027 Offline Intake Form DSS Form 1518 Disaster Preparedness Log DSS Policy: Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) Work Aid 2.1: Using the Structured Decision Making (SDM) Intake Screening and Response Tool Work Aid 3.2: Concerted Efforts to Locate Families Work Aid 3.7: A Case Manager's Guide to Opening and Transitioning Cases South Carolina Hurricane Guide 2023 South Carolina Emergency Management Division Emergency Shelters
---------------	---

Glossary:

Disaster: A potential catastrophe caused by weather or other conditions that brings with it the possible destruction of life and/or property, such as floods, hurricanes, violent weather disturbances, wide-spread disease outbreaks, or other acts, which may necessitate the closing of facilities and/or the disruption of service delivery.

Mandatory Evacuation Order: A mandatory evacuation means residents must follow instructions and evacuate in accordance with local and state officials.

Mandatory Evacuation Zone: When emergencies or disasters happen, officials issue evacuation warnings or mandatory evacuation orders for communities in impacted or potentially impacted evacuation zones.

Shelter: A facility where evacuees without a destination are evaluated and receive disaster services from government agencies and/or pre-established volunteer organizations. Meals and water are available, as well as basic first aid, pet and service animal sheltering (if applicable), sleeping quarters, hygienic support, and basic disaster services.