

Consumer Education Website Continuous Improvement Series Spotlight on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Content



Leveraging Child Care Consumer Education Websites during Emergencies and Disasters: Tips and Best Practices



This tip sheet is designed to help states and territories leverage their child care consumer education websites to communicate critical information to families, providers, and the general public during times of emergencies and disasters.

Share Useful, Timely Content

Focus On the Needs of Your Audience, and Post Information That Families and Providers Need or Want Most

- Develop and share relevant content. Listen to questions asked in community forums, received through your call center, and collected via social media. Develop content that addresses those concerns. Information changes rapidly and so must the content.
- Get feedback—consider working with a select group of stakeholders to identify what type of content may be useful to share. Verify that the content you prepare for posting is clear and understandable.

Ensure Users Can Immediately Find Critical Information Once They Visit Your Website

- Use color, font, and placement to ensure that vital information can easily be found on the page.
- Consider using banners or headers in a bold color to draw attention to critical information.
- Ensure that users can easily see and access critical information from other pages within your site, even if users are on a landing page other than the main home page.

SCBC's Spotlight on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Content Suite Resources

- [Leveraging Your Child Care Consumer Education Website During Emergencies and Disasters: An Assessment Tool](#)
- [Responding to Disasters and Emergencies: Helpful Child Care Information to Share](#)
- [Recovering from Emergencies and Disasters: Helpful Child Care Information to Share](#)
- [Considerations for Emergency Child Care: Information and Tips for Families and Providers](#)
- [Leveraging Child Care Consumer Education Websites During Emergencies and Disasters: Tips and Best Practices](#)



Leveraging Child Care Consumer Education Websites during Emergencies and Disasters: Tips and Best Practices

Format and Write User-Friendly Content to Ensure Understanding

- Format content to facilitate understanding, even if users only scan the page.
 - Use descriptive headers and titles.
 - Use a visual hierarchy to organize text. Ensure that information is organized in clear, precise categories.
- Make sure your content is user-friendly.
 - Use plain language. For example, avoid using complicated technical phrases, scientific or medical terms, acronyms, and jargon. Instead, use words that are short, simple, and commonly understood.
 - Provide clear and concise summaries for emergency orders and official memoranda.
 - Highlight key points in a way that all user groups will understand.

Coordinate Information Sharing to Avoid Confusion

- Avoid duplication of effort and resources. Consider sharing only child care specific updates on your consumer education website. Route users to appropriate resources to ensure they can access the most up-to-date information from the most relevant and trusted source. For example, for public health updates, route users to your state public health website and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#). For information about emergency response, route users to your state emergency management page and the [Federal Emergency Management Agency](#).
- Support coordination—collaborate with key partners on communications to ensure consistent messaging across individual pages and platforms.

Be Timely—Provide Regular and Consistent Updates on a Predictable Schedule

- Time stamp all updates. Consider providing a scrolling feed or information page where users can see communications and updates outlined in the order in which they were released. Organize your feed so that the most recent updates are listed first for easy reference.
- Communicate regularly and clearly. Be responsive to concerns and dispel rumors as they surface.
- Consider your tone. Disasters and emergencies can be a source of anxiety. A measured, timely, and considerate response can go a long way toward reassuring your audience during a crisis.

Promote Your Resources

Make Sure Your Audience Can Find Your Website and Resources

- Your audience should be able to find your emergency preparedness, readiness, and recovery information quickly.
- Consider how your audience may access your consumer education website. For example, determine whether they will go directly to it or access it from another site, such as the child care resource and referral site, subsidy page, or partner website. Make sure there are links to your consumer education website on these related sites.
- Make sure your audience can find your consumer education website easily when they use an online search engine. See the [Child Care State Capacity Building Center's \(SCBC\) Guide for Increasing Search Engine Optimization \(2019\)](#). It includes relatively simple ways to format the content and technical aspects of your website so that search engines will be able to match your website to users' online search criteria and display your website more prominently on search engine results.



Leveraging Child Care Consumer Education Websites during Emergencies and Disasters: Tips and Best Practices

Use Social Media

In times of emergency, people increasingly turn to social media to access information. You can use social media to share key information and direct your audience to emergency and disaster preparedness tools and resources. For more information, see SCBC's [Social Media Strategies to Support Child Care Consumer Education Websites \(2019\)](#). Also, consider the following recommendations:

- Communicate proactively and regularly. Be prepared for predictable emergencies, such as flu, hurricane, tornado, wildfire, and snowstorm seasons. By preparing some content in advance for seasonal emergencies, you will have content that is ready to post and share, which also frees staff to be more responsive during unpredictable emergencies.
- Vary your posting types. Provide calls to action, polls, updates, and sources of inspiration. This approach will allow you to provide critical updates, set a calm and inspiring tone, and help people feel invested in your content.
- Use a clear management process to avoid making errors and sharing inaccurate content. Consider adding an extra layer of oversight for the posting process, including approvals as well as review and monitoring steps. Ensure the process still allows for timely posting of critical information.
- Be selective with shares. Only share information from reliable, agency-approved sources.
- Highlight your key partners. Share successes, helpful resources, and new information as it becomes available.

Remember Accessibility

Use SCBC's guide for [Designing Websites That Are Accessible for All Families \(2019\)](#) to help ensure that all users have equal access to critical information in times of emergency. Consider the following recommendations:

- To effectively serve all segments of your target audience, provide translated information and resources in the core languages spoken by your audience.
- Use plain language and short, concise sentences and paragraphs. This helps facilitate translation and supports the use of screen readers for users with low or no vision.
- Make sure your website is formatted to support the use of screen readers.
 - Ensure each posted image has an alt tag that provides a simple description of the image so that a screen reader can read it.
 - Do not include images with embedded text.
 - Use hierarchical structures, bullets, and whitespace to support the use of screen readers.
- Make sure documents available for download are formatted to support accessibility. Microsoft PowerPoint, Word, and PDF files have features to make them accessible.
- Ensure your updates are mobile friendly.
- Be sure to address special populations and how your agency plans to support them. For more information, see SCBC's [How States and Territories Prepare to Support Special Populations in Emergencies and Disasters \(2017\)](#).



Leveraging Child Care Consumer Education Websites during Emergencies and Disasters: Tips and Best Practices

Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Gateway to health communication: Your one-stop shop for health communication. Retrieved March 23, 2020, from <https://www.cdc.gov/healthcommunication/>
- Child Care State Capacity Building Center. (2020). Resource guide: Emergency preparedness, response, and recovery resources for child care programs. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care. <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/rg5eemergencypreandresponse.pdf>

Do You Have Questions?

If you have questions about whether your planned website enhancements meet Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) requirements, please consult with your [Office of Child Care regional office](#) for guidance.

If you would like technical assistance on developing and enhancing your consumer education website, contact the Child Care State Capacity Building Center (CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info).

The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

State Capacity Building Center, A Service of the Office of Child Care

9300 Lee Highway, Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 877-296-2401

Email: CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info

Subscribe to Updates:

http://www.occ-cmc.org/occannouncements_sign-up/



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES