

Refining CCDF Disaster Plans Following the COVID-19 Pandemic



CHILD CARE

State Capacity Building Center

This brief is part of the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response and Recovery (EPDRR) discussion brief series. These resources are provided to Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) grantees and their partners. They contain strategies and options for CCDF grantees and partners to consider as they refine their state and territory child care disaster plans.

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic changed the way many people thought about child care and its role in disaster response and recovery. Many of the approaches used by state and territory CCDF Lead Agencies in response to COVID-19 may also be applied in response to natural or human-made emergencies and disasters and should be included in planning.

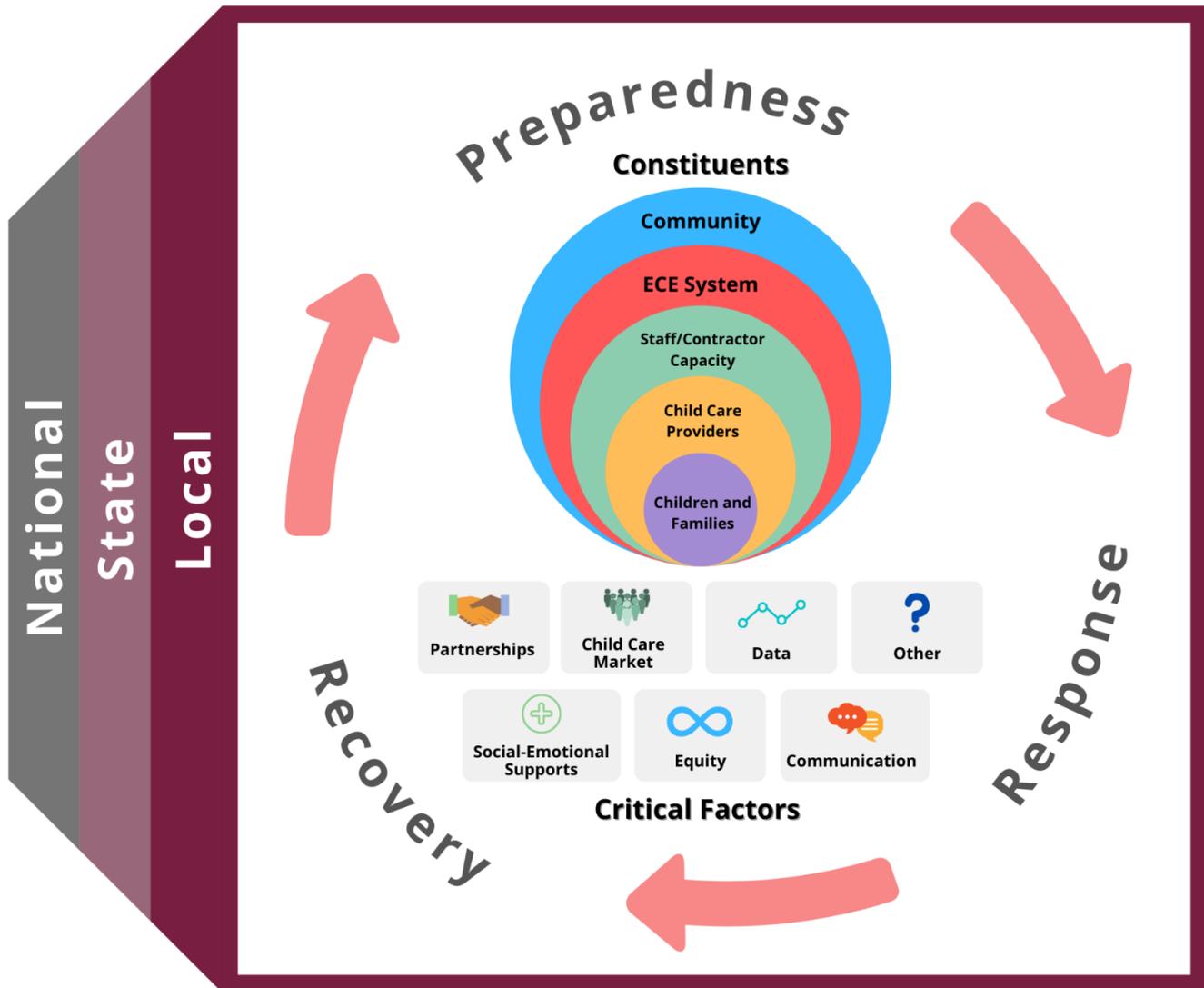
This discussion brief shares considerations with state and territory Lead Agencies to help them refine or revise their state-wide child care disaster plan in relation to the pandemic.

As CCDF Lead Agencies have worked to respond to the pandemic, they have confronted similar challenges. For example, many have worked to support child care for emergency and essential workers. They have also engaged in efforts to sustain and stabilize child care providers. Lead Agencies have encountered options for responding to these needs, such as by changing eligibility requirements and working with nonprofit organizations and foundations.

Conducting an “after action” report will support Lead Agencies as they move from lessons learned to action steps for the next emergency. Documenting these steps in the CCDF state-wide child care disaster plan supports shared decision-making within the agency and with agency partners. It also helps them communicate their plans with the Office of Child Care (OCC). OCC is a partner in disaster response and recovery and initiates frequent communication with Lead Agencies in the aftermath of a disaster. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for this partnership in the administration of the CCDF program.

This brief introduces a graphic organizer for thinking about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This graphic organizer represents the early care and education system, including its constituents and the critical factors that affected it. The pandemic brought to light seven critical factors that you should consider when addressing each group of constituents while planning for, responding to, or recovering from a disaster. The constituents and critical factors help organize the information in this discussion brief and support efforts to refine the CCDF state-wide child care disaster plan.

The graphic organizer is based on the ongoing cycle of planning and preparing for emergencies and disasters, responding to and recovering from them, and circling back to planning based on new learning and awareness. This cycle is also embedded within national, regional, jurisdictional, county, city, and local contexts.



Within the emergency planning, response, and recovery cycle—and influenced by varied perspectives from the local to national levels—are **constituents** and **critical factors**:

- **Constituents** are defined as parts of a larger whole. For this discussion, we will use the term “constituent” to think about the individuals and groups who are part of the CCDF program and whom you should consider when thinking about disaster planning.
- **Critical factors** are used to support the consideration of strategies that apply across constituents but are still embedded in the national, regional, jurisdictional, county, city, and local perspectives.

Constituents

In developing or refining the CCDF state-wide child care disaster plan, you should consider the following **constituents**:



- **Community** includes the emergency's location and the people who are affected beyond the early care and education system.
- **Early care and education (ECE) system capacity** includes the unique capacity within each jurisdiction. It includes the governmental agency partners, nonprofit organizations, advocacy groups, philanthropy partners, and other stakeholders.
- **CCDF Lead Agency staff and contractor capacity** includes how these important players respond and support recovery.
- **Child care providers** include how providers and their staff prepare for, respond to, and recover from emergencies and disasters.
- **Children and families** include the impact of emergencies and disasters on individual families and their children.

Interaction within and across the constituents is ongoing. Planning for communication, cooperation, and coordination are needed.

Critical Factors

For each group of constituents, the following **seven critical factors** can be included in disaster planning:

1. **Child care market and the early care and education workforce**
 - What are the impacts of the emergency or disaster on the demand for child care?
 - Are qualified staff available?
 - How can families find the care they need?
2. **Communication**
 - What communication strategies are needed at each stage of emergency and disaster planning, response, and recovery?
 - Who is the audience?
 - Who else needs this information?
3. **Data**
 - What information is needed at each stage of emergency and disaster planning, response, and recovery?
 - How can the impact of the emergency or disaster on child care in the jurisdiction be described?
4. **Equity**
 - Who is being served, and who still needs services?
 - What is needed to ensure that underserved families and those who need services the most have them?
5. **Partnerships**
 - What information and services are needed, and who has them?
 - Which “trusted messengers” can help reach the intended audiences for these services?
 - Who shares our mission and values?
6. **Social-emotional supports**
 - What supports are needed for each type of constituent?



- How can our partnerships support a timely response?
- What is already in place to begin?

7. Other

- What jurisdiction-specific critical factors have emerged during the pandemic?

Example of Considerations across One Critical Factor and Constituents

CCDF Lead Agencies may identify and define other constituents and critical factors in the process of reviewing actions taken in response to COVID-19. The following examples are considerations that may inform what is included in disaster plans.

Social-Emotional Supports

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for access to mental and behavioral health resources for families, child care providers and staff, and CCDF staff at all levels. Children have also experienced the impact of the pandemic, as trusted adults in child care programs and schools were unavailable or available only virtually. Individuals at all levels of the child care program have been affected either personally or as part of the system and have experienced anxiety and fear. Some have also experienced grief from the loss of loved ones.

OCC developed a comprehensive [list of resources to support social-emotional learning and wellness](#) in children, child care providers and staff, and families.

In the following example, we consider the intersection of the critical factor—social-emotional supports—for each constituent.

Social-Emotional Supports and the Community

When thinking of planning for emergencies and disasters, consider the following questions:

1. Who are partners in supporting the social-emotional needs of those affected by emergencies and disasters?
2. What information is available about the emergency's or disaster's impact across the community so that resources can be directed to those who need it most?
3. Which audiences should be the focus of the outreach? Who are “trusted messengers” in each community to ensure that underserved groups have access?

Social-Emotional Supports and ECE System Capacity

When thinking of planning for emergencies or disasters, consider the following questions:

1. What partnerships exist across the ECE system with other agencies at the state, regional, and local levels to respond to emergencies? What responses and resources does each partner offer?
2. Can existing supports pivot and direct services to disaster-affected populations?



Social-Emotional Supports and Lead Agency Staff and Contractor Capacity

When thinking of planning for emergencies and disasters, consider the following questions:

1. What services can staff access to support their own mental health? How are these communicated to staff?
2. Can contingency contracts for social-emotional support services be developed?
3. What training is available for staff and contractors about supporting social-emotional health following emergencies and disasters?

Social-Emotional Supports and Child Care Providers

When thinking of planning for emergencies and disasters, consider the following questions:

1. What do providers know about social-emotional supports for themselves and their staff?
2. How can ongoing training, help for challenging behaviors, and infant–early childhood mental health consultation be shifted to support those affected by emergencies and disasters?
3. How will the need for these services be communicated?

Social-Emotional Supports and Children and Families

When thinking of planning for emergencies and disasters, consider the following questions:

1. What information can providers give to families about help following emergencies and disasters, and in which languages?
2. What messages can be developed in advance about social-emotional supports?
3. Will a cross-disciplinary Children and Youth in Disaster Task Force (or similar group) be convened to ensure communication and coordination of services?

In refining CCDF state-wide child care disaster plans, Lead Agencies can reflect on the challenges they faced and approaches they used to respond during the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges and strategies may also provide opportunities for a change in thinking about the CCDF program. By using the graphic organizer, staff may refine parts of the disaster plan to respond to the critical factors for each constituent identified during the pandemic.

This discussion brief is meant to support state and territory efforts in the refinement of CCDF state-wide child care disaster plans. Technical assistance and supplementary resources are available from State Systems Specialists and the Emergency Preparedness and Disaster Response and Recovery Team in each Administration for Children and Families Region. Emergency preparedness resources are also available from OCC.

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

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