Disaster Preparedness and Response Information and Resources

Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) appointed a Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council (DPAC) in 2007 to mobilize efforts related to pediatric preparedness planning and response. The DPAC recommends that children’s issues be addressed early on in the development of disaster preparedness programs and activities and encourages community planners to include pediatric experts in all levels of disaster planning and response. The DPAC includes 6 AAP member experts and 5 liaisons from key federal agencies: the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HHS Office of the Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), National Institute for Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), and US Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The DPAC has helped the AAP to:
- Implement an AAP strategic action plan for disaster preparedness.
- Integrate AAP disaster preparedness initiatives with other groups and partner organizations.
- Strengthen AAP advocacy and policy efforts, which include responding to inquiries as appropriate, identifying opportunities for advocacy such as providing Congressional testimony, and offering comments on federal regulations and resources.
- Mobilize a contact network and provide assistance to help members integrate pediatric issues into their local and state preparedness efforts.

See the 2012-2015 DPAC strategic plan at www.aap.org/disasters/strategicplan. The DPAC recommends that there be a mechanism in place to facilitate strategic discussion and collaborative decision-making among pediatric experts and federal agencies early on during a public health emergency or disaster. The AAP determines optimal pediatric recommendations by identifying and polling experts with various perspectives and arriving at a consensus conclusion. There are benefits to contacting the AAP for a collective pediatric perspective. Seeking organizational review or endorsement on guidance documents or preparedness initiatives could prove beneficial to agencies and organizations seeking to ensure that the pediatric perspective is integrated into the planning and response process. For details, e-mail DisasterReady@aap.org.

AAP Children and Disasters Web Site
The DPAC provides oversight for the AAP Children and Disasters Web site at www.aap.org/disasters, which is a comprehensive resource for health professionals, policymakers, child care and school representatives, and families. Topics include adjustment and coping, extreme temperatures, financial crisis, earthquakes, influenza/pandemics, oil spills, natural disasters, disaster preparedness for pediatric practices, talking to children about disasters, and terrorism. An events calendar and PowerPoint presentations are also available.

Disaster Preparedness Contact Network
The AAP created a Disaster Preparedness Contact Network in 2008 to:
1. Identify active members involved in disaster preparedness and emergency readiness.
2. Provide a mechanism (through an electronic mailing list) to share progress on AAP initiatives, resources, and opportunities regarding disaster preparedness.
3. Create a forum of members who could support AAP initiatives by providing expertise, representing the AAP at meetings, presenting at conferences, and integrating pediatric issues into local and state efforts.
4. Identify members willing to serve as a Chapter Disaster Preparedness Contact in or “Chapter Champion”.
There are many things that individual pediatricians and Chapter Disaster Preparedness Contacts can do to encourage pediatric preparedness:

1. Review preparedness Web sites to make sure that children’s issues are addressed. Ask that a link to the AAP Children and Disasters Web site be added to these sites.
2. Initiate a mechanism to promote communication during a disaster. Compile a list of key pediatric and community colleagues with their e-mail and cell phone numbers; determine responsibilities for who will contact whom in what circumstances; determine how routine messages can be distinguished from critical updates or “health alerts”. Test out the system.
3. Conduct a training to help a child care facility prepare for an outbreak or pandemic. See www.aap.org/disasters/childcare and www.aap.org/disasters/childcarepandemic.
4. Review AAP policies such as Disaster Planning for Schools and Medical Emergencies Occurring at School and partner with school health professionals to develop a community-wide preparedness plan. See www.aap.org/disasters/hurricane for more details.
5. Partner with the Red Cross or other groups that coordinate shelter services to ensure appropriate standards, supplies, and food for children. See www.aap.org/disasters/hurricane for guidelines.
6. Join the Emergency System for Advance Registration of Volunteer Health Professionals in Your State. For more information, refer to www.phe.gov/esarvhp/Pages/default.aspx.
8. Connect with disaster volunteer agencies in your state. For more information, refer to the Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC) Disaster Volunteer Opportunities by state Web page at http://www.childrensnational.org/EMSC/DisasterPreparedness/DisasterAgencies/.
10. Encourage your community hospital to sign up to participate in National Disaster Medical System efforts. For more details, visit www.phe.gov/Preparedness/responders/ndms/Pages/default.aspx.
11. Get involved in AAP state Chapter preparedness activities; consider becoming a Chapter Disaster Preparedness Contact. For more information, see www.aap.org/disasters/stateinitiatives.

Quarterly reports and newsletters are provided to Contact Network members. For details and copes of newsletters, visit www.aap.org/disasters/contactnetwork.

Enhancing Pediatric Partnerships to Promote Pandemic Preparedness
To improve pediatric preparedness for future public health emergencies, the AAP and the CDC convened a collaborative meeting to review information from the 2009 H1N1 pandemic in April 2011. This meeting included 66 participants: 40 representatives from 10 states (California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, Utah, and Virginia) representing the AAP state chapter and public health leaders. Meeting participants discussed lessons learned from the pandemic, determined strategies for advancing pediatric preparedness, and identified resources to improve state-level pediatric preparedness. Meeting proceedings and other resources can be found at www.aap.org/disasters/pandemicmtg2011.

Promoting Adjustment and Helping Children Cope
www.aap.org/disasters/adjustment
After a disaster, children may have difficulty coping and may develop a range of symptoms, including depression, anxiety, or bereavement. This Web page includes resources that can be offered to pediatricians, children, and families to help them understand and cope with loss. Also see Talking to Children About Disasters at www.aap.org/disasters/talkingtochildren.
National Commission on Children and Disasters
www.ahrq.gov/prep/nccdreport/
The DPAC worked closely with the Commission from 2007 to 2011. Despite the advocacy of the AAP and its allies, the Commission terminated in April 2011. See the progress report on children and disasters (May 2010) and the comprehensive report to the President and Congress (Oct 2010).

Opinion Poll
www.aap.org/disasters/opinion
The AAP, in collaboration with the Children’s Health Fund, conducted an opinion poll to stimulate discussion on the use of resources related to disaster planning and response specific to children’s issues. The poll also responded to guidelines from the Institute of Medicine that dismissed, on ethical grounds, prioritizing children above adults with the same condition when a disaster overwhelmed resources and required that prioritization occur. Marist College Institute for Public Opinion conducted a telephone survey that included 6 questions prepared by the AAP. The majority of people surveyed supported giving higher priority to children and their needs over adults. Opinions remained consistent across various demographics, including region, household income, education, age, race, gender and political party.

Joint Policy Statement – Guidelines for Care of Children in the Emergency Department
http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/peds.2009-1807v1
This statement outlines resources necessary to ensure that hospital Emergency Departments are ready to care for children of all ages, from neonates to adolescents. A checklist is also provided at http://www2.aap.org/visit/Checklist_ED_Prep-022210.pdf.

Policy Statement – Emergency Information Forms and Emergency Preparedness for Children With Special Health Care Needs
http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/abstract/125/4/829?maxtoshow=&hits=10&RESULTFORMAT=&fulltext=emergency+information+forms&searchid=1&FIRSTINDEX=0&sortspec=relevance&resourcetype=HWCIT
This statement describes updates to the Emergency Information Form (EIF), including computerization of the EIF, benefits of the EIF, quality-improvement programs using the EIF, the EIF as a central repository, and facilitating emergency preparedness in disaster management and drills by using the EIF.

Policy Statement – The Pediatrician and Disaster Preparedness
http://aappolicy.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/pediatrics;117/2/560
This policy describes the pediatrician’s role in disaster preparedness and offers ideas and recommendations for those who wish to get more involved.

Pediatric Bereavement Lectureship Program
The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement and New York Life Foundation have launched a Pediatric Bereavement Lectureship Program to offer training to pediatric health care providers to increase skills in supporting grieving children/families. This program provides speakers and up to $3,000 for a 2-day lectureship and consultation to enhance existing bereavement services or implement an initiative after a disaster. For information, see the AAP Children and Disasters Web site www.aap.org/disasters/lectureship.

Pediatric Preparedness Resource Kit
The American Academy of Pediatrics has created a Pediatric Preparedness Resource Kit, developed in response to the 2009 H1N1 pandemic. This resource will allow for collaboration between pediatricians, public health leaders, and other pediatric care providers to assess what is already happening in their communities or states, and help determine what still needs to be done before an emergency or disaster.

For additional information on AAP disaster preparedness initiatives, see www.aap.org/disasters or e-mail DisasterReady@aap.org.