



Is Your Child Care Center Preparing for Disasters?



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If you operate a child care center or family day home, are you prepared for an emergency or disaster? According to Alexis Cordova, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Agent in Liberty County, an area of risk management that sometimes gets neglected or overlooked is disaster management.

Being prepared for natural and man-made disasters is an integral part of an overall disaster manage-



ment plan. Questions that come to mind regarding disaster preparedness include:

- Do we have a plan, and is it up to date?
- Does our plan cover preparedness, response, and recovery efforts?
- Can we find our plan?
- Has the staff been trained on how to use the plan?
- Have we practiced it enough?
- Have we adequately informed parents about the plan?
- Are we prepared to evaluate in case of a disaster?
- Do we have disaster supply kits?
- Are we prepared, if necessary, to shelter in place?

“How you answer these questions can make a difference in how prepared you are for an emergency or disaster and the aftermath that follows,” says Dr. Rick Peterson, Assistant Professor and Texas Cooperative Extension Parenting Specialist. Being prepared is critical to minimize the trauma and stress associated with a disaster or emergency for staff, children, and parents.

Children are considered to be a vulnerable population during a disaster and as such need the protection of adults. “Children have characteristics that make them susceptible to the effects of disaster,” says Dr. Peterson. “For example, young children, age birth to two, have little understanding of cause and effect relationships and past experience to deal with the crisis. However, 2-5 year olds may have abandonment fears after a disaster. Those children who are directly impacted by the disaster may experience both physical and psychological trauma effects of disaster,” says Dr. Peterson. In some cases, children may incur long-term problems such as depression, prolonged grief, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Child care providers need to be prepared for emergencies and disasters, as they can occur quickly and without warning and can threaten the health and safety of the children and staff. Fortunately, there are resources available to assist child care administrators and providers in their preparedness planning. Child care emergency preparedness guides can be accessed from several Texas AgriLife Extension Service websites: Disaster Education Network (EDEN) at <http://texashelp.tamu.edu>.



Remember, being prepared is the best protection for you, your staff, the children in your care, and their parents.

Source: Dr. Rick Peterson, Assistant Professor and Parenting Specialist, Texas AgriLife Extension Service.

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Questions?

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EASING TRANSITIONS: BALANCING WORK & FAMILY

If you have a job and other responsibilities (like taking care of a family), you might feel like:

- There is too much to be done.
- You don't ever have enough time.
- Your life is stressful.

Ways to avoid these feelings that are covered in this fact sheet include:

- Organizing your time,
- Budgeting your money, and
- Getting along with family and friends.



Organize Your Time

Completing tasks

- *Decide what is really important in your life.* List the five most important parts of your life.

For example, you might list: children, home, work, friends, and self.

- *Make taking care of yourself a priority.* You will be better able to take care of your other responsibilities if you first take care of your needs, such as: eating well, getting enough rest, and taking time for yourself.
- *Decide what really needs to be done each day.* Say "No" to activities that don't fit in with the most important parts of your life.

For example, if "children" are on your list, but "shopping" is not, then you might choose to help your

child with homework instead of going shopping one night.

- *Make "to do" lists every day.* Put the most important things at the top of the list. Start with the "musts" (things that have to be done), then list your "wants" (things you'd like to do, but that aren't necessary).
- *Accept that you can't do everything.* Try to do the most important things, and don't worry or feel guilty about not doing everything on your list. Be sure to tell people who expect you to do something if you decide not to do it.

- *Pick the best times to do chores.* Everyone has natural times of the day when they feel most energetic. It could be morning, evening, or any other time. Do really hard tasks during the times when you have the most energy, and do easier tasks at other times.

- *Find a calm time to do chores.* This might be early in the morning, before your children wake up.
- *Break down big jobs into smaller parts.* Instead of doing everything all at once, do one small piece at a time.

For example, instead of cleaning your whole house at once, you could do one room each evening or early morning.

- *Try to think about just one thing at a time.*
- *Do what you can, a little at a*

time. In order to get more important things done, you might have to let other things be less than perfect. That's okay!

- *Even though some chores need to be done, they could be done less often—maybe once a month rather than once a week.*
- *Let others do some tasks.* Most school-aged children can be taught to make their own lunches and snacks, get their clothes and backpacks ready the night before school, wash dishes, pick up or put things away, and make their beds. If you take the time to teach them these things, it will save you much more time later!
- *Divide chores among family members.* Think about what your children are able to do and what they are good at before deciding on their chores. Remember, it's okay if the chore is not done perfectly; the important thing is that it gets done! It's a learning process!
- *Ask for help from—or trade chores with—neighbors, relatives, or friends.*

For example, you could help your neighbor with something you are good at (such as sewing), and your neighbor could do you a favor in return (like getting your children off the school bus).





SING TO READ: DEVELOPING CRITICAL EARLY READING SKILLS (4 HOUR TRAINING)

Dr. Mike Longoria has a Ph. D in early childhood education. He is a speaker at local, state, and national early childhood conferences. For more information on his dynamic and engaging workshops, go to :
drmike@drmike.info

Description: Come to this training prepared to move, sing and have fun. Singing along to popular stories / nursery rhymes with culturally / ethnic relevant rhythms (hip-hop, rock, reggae, etc.) provide children, birth to school age, with important literacy skills. Furthermore, musical experiences allow children to make critical brain connections throughout their day.

Location: Lutheran Holy Cross Church's Family Life Center, Nederland, Texas

For more information please contact: Kay Brown, MACCA secretary, lutheran_ece@sbcglobal.net, 409-722-2177 or Sharon Kruger, Region 5 ESC Program Coordinator, skruger@esc5.net, 409-923-5440.

If you are interested in obtaining CEU credit for this training, contact Alexis Cordova, FCS Liberty County AgriLife Extension Service, ancordova@ag.tamu.edu, 936-336-4558 ext. 221.



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Online Training

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- Online courses for child care professionals seeking to fulfill state-mandated training requirements or obtain hours toward the **Child Development Associate (CDA) National Credential**.
- To receive **official credit** for the courses, participants must pass a course exam and pay a processing fee to obtain a printable certificate.

Planning and Scheduling

- Put up a family calendar and message board in your home. Each family member can write down activities or things that need to be done on the family calendar, as soon as they know about it. You can plan around these activities.
- Put notes, reminders, and messages for family members in one central place, like on your message board. Help everyone get in the habit of checking it often. Put the family calendar and message board in a place where everyone will see it, such as in the kitchen or near the telephone.
- List emergency phone numbers and other numbers that are used often on the message board.
- Make a plan for emergency situations.

For example, create a plan for who will take care of your child while you work if your child is sick, so you won't have to arrange child care at the last minute. Consider who can take the child to the place for sick-child care as well.

- Avoid rushing to get ready for work. Set your alarm clock early enough so that you won't have to rush. Decide on work clothes ahead of time, make sure they are clean, and lay them out.
- Keep the things you need for work in one place.
- Plan on having a happy morning with your children. Some children are more active in the



morning and some are still half asleep! A smooth morning can set the pace for your day and theirs.

- Try to do several errands in the same trip, to save time and money. You may want to buy more groceries during a trip to the grocery store, if you can, so you won't have to make as many trips. Big packages of food (in bulk) sometimes cost less per serving, last longer, and save you time.
- Plan the errands you will run and make a shopping list of what you will buy before you leave the house.

Budgeting

You may earn more money when you start a new job, but you may also have to pay for new things.

For example, you might need to spend money on:

- Transportation (such as gas for a car or bus fare) to get to work,
- Child care, and
- New clothes to wear for work.

These new expenses may be very hard to deal with at first. But if you are ready for them, you can keep yourself from feeling too stressed about how to pay your bills.

- Be prepared (before you start work). Make a list of all the new things you will have to pay for when you start working. Think about whether they really have to be "new" and where you can get the best buy.

- Think about what you spend money on now. What you could cut back on in order to handle new work expenses?



- Create a budget (a plan for how to spend your money). If you need it, get help in learning how to budget. Many community agencies can help, such as the Cooperative Extension Service.

Basic Steps to Budgeting:

1. Figure out about how much income you expect to have in the next month. Ask your employer what your take home pay will be.
 2. Create a spending plan, based on everything you think you will need to pay for in a month. Decide how much you expect to spend on different areas, such as food, clothing, rent or housing, electric or gas bills, transportation, child care, medical care, and savings. Make sure the total spending isn't more than your total income.
 3. Try to follow your spending plan for a month, and keep track of how much you really spend in the different areas. You can do this by writing down everything you spend in a notebook, or by keeping all your receipts in a special place (a box, envelope or drawer).
 4. After a month, compare your actual income and expenses to your spending plan. You can do this by writing down everything you spend in a notebook, or by keeping all your receipts in a special place (a box, envelope, or drawer).
- Did you follow your spending plan?

- Did you spend more money than the income you received?
- Do you need to change your spending plan, the way you shop, or both?

After a few months of working and trying out different spending plans, you will probably be able to make a spending plan that helps you spend less and save more.

Relationships With Family and Friends

Having positive relationships with your family and friends can help make your transition into work much easier. Here are a few things to keep in mind.



- *Think about who can give you personal support.* Expand this support group. Get to know your neighbors, and keep strong ties with friends and relatives. It's important to have at least one person you can talk to about your concerns, decisions, or when you are just having a bad day.

If there is no one available for you to talk to, look in your community for people who give counseling (in places like churches or mental health agencies) and take advantage of it. You'd be surprised how much easier it is to handle a problem when you tell someone about it.

- *Expect an adjustment period for your family and friends.* Starting work not only changes your life, it affects the people

around you, too! Because you may have a different schedule, new responsibilities, and less time to be with the people close to you, be prepared for them to have a difficult time at first — especially your children!

It may take a little time for your family and friends to adjust, so try to be patient. Soon they should become used to your new lifestyle.

- *Work on getting along with family members.* Be open and honest when talking to other family members. Tell each other exactly how you feel.

Listen carefully when others are talking to you; give them your full attention. Make sure you know what they mean by asking them questions or repeating what they said. For example:

"Are you saying that...." or "Do you mean....."

If a family member does something that upsets you, tell him or her how that behavior made you feel, instead of insulting the person.

For example: If your teenager comes home very late, you can say, "It scares me when you come home so late, because I get worried that something happened to you," instead of saying, "You have no sense of time what's wrong with you?" (When things are calm, talk to them about what you expect next time!)

- *Have family meetings.* Schedule a regular time for the family to sit down and talk about everyone's concerns and feelings

about how things are going at home. You might want to have a meeting every week. Allow each person to share his or her problems and ideas for solutions.

A scheduled time to talk together helps you deal with any problems before they cause a lot of stress for the family. Family members will also be happier when they feel like their concerns are being listened to and considered.

- *Give children a few minutes of attention after work.* Even though you will probably feel exhausted when you get home from work, try to spend a short time with your children right when you get home. For older children, it may only need to be a quick hug and a few minutes of talking or playing games. This will help your children to feel more safe and content, and it may keep them from getting irritable and upset that evening. (It may save you *more* time later!)

Summary

Although these actions will not solve all your work and family balance issues, they may help some in your transition. By organizing your time, developing a budget, and planning family time, you are on your way to great success!



Prepared by

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Get Off to a Good Start



Starting School is a big step for any child. Texas AgriLife Extension Service offers these suggestions to help your child get off to a good start this year.

- **Begin With Breakfast**

Breakfast is probably the most important meal of the day for a young child. Studies have shown that students who start the day with a nutritious breakfast make better grades, concentrate better, and make fewer mistakes than non-breakfast eaters. Your school may offer a free or reduced breakfast program. Contact your school's office for information.

- **Here are some nutritious breakfast ideas:**



Yogurt
Smoothies made with fruit and yogurt
Cooked cereal
Bran or fruit muffins
Peanut butter sandwiches

Bagels with cream cheese
Grilled cheese sandwiches
Low sugar cereal (like Cheerios) and milk
Scrambled egg and whole wheat toast or waffles, topped with fresh fruit

- **End with a Routine**

Establishing a regular evening routine helps children learn what is expected of them and makes bedtime easier.

Set aside some time each evening for reviewing your child's papers from school. Display papers proudly on your refrigerator or wall. Encourage your children to show you what they have learned.

Set aside a specific amount of time for TV watching. If children know that TV time is always from 7:00 to 8:00 and bath time follows, they are less likely to argue.

Once your child has been tucked into his or her own bed for the night, spend a few minutes discussing events of the day or sharing a bedtime story. This special time gives your child a feeling of security and provides a great opportunity for you to learn about what is going on in your child's life.

For more information about all kinds of parenting topics, check out the Children, Youth, and Families Education and Research Network (CYFERNET) website: <http://cyfernet.org>.

**Looking for Hands-On Activities?
Check this out!**

Need more than just coloring sheets...

Better Kid Care America database of hands-on activities. Here you will find hundreds of hands-on, ready-to-do activities especially designed to help young children of different ages learn, develop and flourish. The activities can be used in the curriculum of child care classrooms or family child care homes. Parents and grandparents may also enjoy sharing some of the activities with children at home.

Search or browse classroom activities to find what you need for language and literacy, math, science, art, social skills, music, movement and physical activity. You can search ideas by children's age, subject, skills learned and even by season.

There are three ways to see the activities:

- Search for activities that meet your specific needs.
- View a list of all activities (alphabetical by title)
- Browse individual activities to see what catches your eye.

Find it on the web:

[http://
campus.extension.
org/mod/data/
view.php?id=5265](http://campus.extension.org/mod/data/view.php?id=5265)

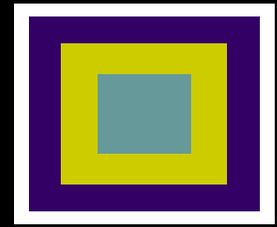


FAMILY FORWARD

How can I make the transition to child care easier for my child?

Leaving your child in a child care program for the first time may be hard for both of you. These feelings are normal responses to transition into something new. But with careful planning and preparation, you can help reduce the "first-week jitters." Here are some tips:

- Talk with your child about the new child care setting. Discuss some of the things he might do.
- If possible, visit the program with your child before her first full day. Let her watch and explore. Be sure she meets her new caregiver when you visit.
- Share information with the caregiver. Explain your child's eating and sleeping schedules, health concerns, what upsets him, and how he can be comforted.
- Fill out and return all the forms and paperwork the program needs before your child's first day. This will make the first full day much less stressful.
- Bring what your child needs.
- Arrive a few minutes early so you can greet the caregiver, put away your child's things, and help her find an activity.
- Plan to spend a little extra time the first day sitting with him and helping him get used to the new setting.
- Consider making the first day or two half-days, or at least picking her up a little early.
- Be ready for separation anxiety. Some children may cry, scream, kick, or cling to you when you try to leave. When it's time to go, say goodbye calmly, and tell her when you will return. Don't sneak out without saying goodbye; this just makes the adjustment harder when your child realizes you have left.
- When you pick up your child, show you're glad to see him. Ask if he had a good day. Don't be surprised if he is both glad to see you and mad that you left.
- Spend a little extra one-on-one time with your child that evening, and give some extra hugs and cuddles if needed.



FAMILY FORWARD is provided by Alexis Cordova, Family & Consumer Sciences Agent, with Texas AgriLife Extension Service in Liberty County.



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Homemade Items: Where Creativity and Thriftiness Equal Fun!

In their preschool years, kids thrive on the freedom to experiment and explore as they play. Toys with little detail invite all sorts of pretending. For example, an ordinary cardboard box can become a rocket ship, a turtle shell or a cave - all at the child's whim. A worn-out sock can become a puppet and become a variety of characters with few or no changes.

On the other hand, toys or play objects that are full of detail offer children a single use only. That's why plain wooden blocks, large simple cars and trucks and materials like clay and finger paint have retained their age-old popularity. Toys and activities based on household objects are

usually inexpensive and can be designed to appeal to a variety of ages. They may not last long, but most will serve the length of the child's interest. If a homemade toy turns out to be a favorite, additional ones can be easily made as needed.

It is extremely important when making homemade toys that you keep your child's safety in mind. Check all toys and activities for:

- Small parts that could be swallowed and inhaled.
- Sharp edges that can cut, poke, or pinch.
- Paint or dyes that may be toxic.

Popular homemade toys include modeling dough, milk-carton or

shoebox blocks, meat-tray sewing cards, paper-bag or sock puppets and 2-liter-bottle bowling sets.

Children have proven over and over that common household objects can have as much play value as an array of expensive or elaborate toys. Parents with a bit of creativity, an eye for safety and an adequate supply of enthusiasm can provide their family with hours of inexpensive and educational fun.



Paper-bag puppets are among the many kinds of toys that can be made from household items.