CREATING A FAMILY EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

When disaster strikes, like the recent wildfire that swept through suburban areas between Denver and Boulder in December, children are vulnerable. It's important to remember that children cannot adjust on their own when the people, places and routines they depend on for safety and well-being are affected by upheaval.

Parents or caregivers may be overwhelmed addressing the needs of their whole family's recovery. Child care centers and schools may be damaged, destroyed or used as shelters.

Infants, toddlers and children require special care and supplies at times of emergency. Their brains are still developing. More than one million new brain connections form every second from belly to age eight and this continues into adulthood! The interaction of genes and experiences shapes our brain and relationships are the active ingredient in this serve and return process.

It's because of this that the experiences and relationships young children have in the early years can impact them for life. Children are also most likely to suffer long-term developmental, physical and psychological setbacks following a disaster if parents and communities don't offer support.

Preparing ahead of time to meet children's unique needs at times of disaster is critical to their protection.

But, family crises don't just come in the form of a natural disaster.

- Medical emergencies
- Unemployment
- Financial and food instability
- Homelessness
- Substance use disorders
- Mental health challenges
- Violence in our homes
- Lack of child care

These types of challenges place similar overwhelming stress on families and it's important to know what resources are available in your community to keep your family strong - before you or a loved one are in crisis.

If you are a single parent, these challenges are significantly more challenging if you don't have a network of family and friends to help you take care of your children and keep them safe and healthy.

FIVE STEPS TO PREPARE FOR FAMILY CRISIS

Prep Step 1 - Know Your People

Similar to preparing for a natural disaster, it's important to know emergency contacts.

If you are a parent, **name four people nearby who could help you lighten the load** before our family is in crisis. Who could help out with child care if your routine shifts unexpectedly? Who could help with pick up and drop off at school and help with meal prep?

If you aren't a parent or caregiver, **think of three children in your life who you love.** Share your contact information.

Let them know you are there if they need you.

Name: _____ Name: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Prep Step 2 - Know Your Coverage & Available Assistance

Look at your insurance coverage to support therapy and basic needs. Identify available assistance.

- Private Insurance
- Medicaid
- Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Women, Infants & Children Assistance (WIC)
- Housing Assistance
- Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Program Name:_____

Phone: _____

Website: _____

Documentation Needed for Assistance:

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Program Name:_____

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Website: _____

Documentation Needed for Assistance:

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Prep Step 3 - Find Your Concrete Supports in Times of Need

Get to know your community. Identify statewide hotlines and helplines in Colorado to call for support.

Look for local organizations that have programs and services that either provide support or can help connect you to other local resources.

HINT: Pinwheels are on display at many locations in Colorado that strengthen families or call 211 for a directory.

Your list of supports may look different depending on how many different challenges you want to prepare for.

- Medical emergencies
- Unemployment
- Financial and food instability
- Homelessness
- Substance use disorders
- Mental health challenges
- Violence in our homes
- Lack of child care

The programs listed below offer some or all of these services, but they look different in every community.

Advocacy services. Specially trained advocates who can help with safety planning. Advocates can help you get information about welfare, CPS, disability services, immigration, housing, employment protections, and more.

Emergency shelter or other safe lodging on a temporary basis.

Housing Options. longer term housing options for individuals and families

Emergency Financial Support.
Support groups. Groups for children, youth, and adults.

Legal advocacy. Information about protection orders and other civil matters. Most programs do not provide legal counsel, but may be able to refer you to free or low cost attorneys.

Program Name:_____

Phone: _____

Website: _____

Documentation Needed for Assistance:

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Prep Step 4 - Make List of People You Can Talk To

A caring listening ear is critical when you are in crisis. Make a list of people who can help you sort out options.

Name: _____ Name: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Name: _____ Name: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Prep Step 5 - Share Your Plan

Share the completed plan with those who need to know.

- Meet with household members every 6 months or as needs change to update the household plan.
- If you listed a friend or family member in the plan, let them know they are a support for your family.
- Share your expereinces with your community.
  Visit COPinwheelsForPrevention.org to let others know if it was easy or hard to find support in your community.
- If you have personal expereinces with organizations or programs in your community, make recommendations to help others who may follow you on your pathway to stability.