

As emergency conditions arise it is important to think through the stability of your program and make a decision about remaining open for business or closing for short or extended periods of time. The following are some important considerations as you weigh your options.

1. Health and Safety - The health and safety of the children and staff should always be an important factor in any choice. If choose to stay open you should meet the following requirements.
 - a. No immediate health or safety risks (e.g., mold, structure/foundation, etc.)
 - b. Electricity is available.
 - c. An approved water source is available.
 - d. You have a means of sewage disposal.
 - e. Facility heating or cooling is functional and approved--when applicable (e.g., heat in winter)
 - f. You are able to maintain staff/child ratios at all times.
 - g. If you are caring for children with special health considerations you are able to meet those needs.
2. Emergency Plan - An emergency plan is in place that includes a realistic evacuation plan with a mode of transportation and a means for staying in contact with parents/guardians.
 - a. Mode of travel. You will be able to transport all children out of harms way in one trip.
 - b. Safely transport. You have car seats available and can adequately fit them into your vehicle and can safely leave the area.
 - c. Temporary shelter. You have identified a safe place to go that can accommodate your needs for a period of time.
 - d. Appropriate supervision. You will be able to appropriately supervise children while preparing your home for departure (is there someone else with you at all times?).
 - e. Emergency supplies. You have an adequate amount of supplies ready to be taken with you at a moments notice (e.g., diapers, formula).
 - f. Communication. You have a formal means for maintaining ongoing communication with your families as to your status.
 - g. You have an emergency radio to be notified of official alerts. A radio or television should not be left running in the area of the children. Ongoing newscasts may raise the anxiety levels of the children in your care.
3. County or City Official Advisories. Pay attention and take into consideration what local officials are recommending for area businesses.
 - a. Is travel advised in your service area?
 - b. Are other businesses opening in the area?
 - c. Will conditions improve or deteriorate throughout the day?

4. Helping children cope. Children are absorbent sponges who take in what is happening around them. They are affected by heightened anxiety in adults and may require additional care and nurturing during times of disaster or emergency situations. Your ability to respond to children during these times is also a factor in decision making.
 - a. Can you maintain as much consistency as possible in your daily routine?
 - b. Are you prepared to encourage expression – conversation, story telling, dramatic play, and drawing?
 - c. You are able to respond to children’s questions and calmly reassure them as needed.
 - d. You are able to give the children your full attention and not be distracted by the worries of your situation or that of others.

If you make the decision to close your program there are a few things you can do to help the families you provide services to:

- Get a sense of how many families may need care and refer them to Child Care Resource and Referral for alternative care options.
- Communicate with your families and develop a means for staying in contact for further updates about the status of your child care program.
- Consider forming a partnership with a child care program in a safe part of the area (CCR&R can help you identify which programs may be interested).
 - Look for programs that may be willing to accommodate your families in the event you need to close.
 - Look for programs that share your ideas and philosophy for caring for children.
 - Look for a program that has space to accommodate a larger number of children.
 - Can you or your staff safely go work at the partner program to help care for your child care children?
 - Can you contribute needed furnishings and supplies to accommodate the additional children (e.g., cribs, cots)?

Staying out of harm’s way and keeping children/staff safe at all times is always the most important consideration in decision making. If you have specific questions about planning for a disaster/emergency situation feel free to contact Child Care Resource and Referral.

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Leading the way for Child Care in North Dakota