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November 15, 2010

Mark K. Shriver

Commission Chairperson

National Commission on Children and Disasters

1250 Maryland Avenue, SW

8<sup>th</sup> Floor East

Washington, D.C. 20447

RE: Comments for the National Commission on Children and Disasters Meeting

Dear Mr. Shriver:

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), a non-profit professional organization of more than 60,000 primary care pediatricians, pediatric medical subspecialists, and pediatric surgical specialists dedicated to the health, safety, and well-being of infants, children, adolescents, and young adults, appreciates this opportunity to provide comments for the National Commission on Children and Disasters meeting on November 15, 2010.

The AAP strongly supports the recommendations within the National Commission on Children and Disasters (Commission) *2010 Report to the President and Congress* released last month. The AAP believes this report serves to further highlight the necessary actions that must be taken to ensure that the needs of children are met during a disaster planning, response, and recovery. The term of the Commission should be extended so that it can continue its vital work on behalf of children and so that it can provide technical assistance and guidance to the federal agencies tasked with implementing its recommendations.

The AAP has been a long-standing proponent of the creation of a federal National Resource Center (NRC) for children and disasters. More than five years have passed since Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and it is regrettable that more progress on the creation of an NRC has not been made. The AAP maintains a comprehensive website on children and disasters ([www.aap.org/disasters](http://www.aap.org/disasters)) that provides information appropriate for pediatricians, providers, families, schools and others about emergency and disaster preparedness for children. While the AAP's website is wide-ranging, it cannot take the place of a comprehensive federal website for all disciplines that would draw together all the relevant resources from federal agencies and other professional organizations across the fields of health, child welfare, housing, education, food assistance, and more. The Academy has a wealth of information and has acquired relevant expertise from the development of its website. As such, we offer our knowledge and lessons learned to the Commission and respective federal agencies as they work toward the development of an NRC.

The success of an NRC necessitates an effective public-private sector partnership and the Academy looks forward to partnering in this effort. The Academy recommends that the NRC be sufficiently funded to both develop and maintain such a website. We also recommend that the website link with the Academy's Disasters and Children site as well as other federal and non-federal sites. The NRC website must be available to all members of the public and not require a password for access.

Similar to the Academy's Disasters and Children site, the AAP strongly urges that the NRC be geared toward a general audience including, but not limited to, families, healthcare providers, schools, and child care centers. Numerous federal and non-federal internet sites currently provide information about children and disasters, but the NRC should serve as a central clearinghouse for up-to-date information pertaining to pediatric readiness. For the ease of the consumer, the NRC should be a one-stop location for reliable information about the needs of children.

Additionally, the NRC should provide resource information to federal, state, local, territorial, and tribal governments as well as the general public on issues relating to the needs of children before, during, and after all hazards, disasters, and emergencies. The Academy encourages the NRC to take a broad view of the needs of children, to include not only medical care, but also mental health, child care, child welfare, education, housing, transportation, and juvenile justice. In addition to addressing the unique needs of children as a whole, this broad view must also consider children with special needs.

Currently, disaster preparedness and response as it relates to the need of children exists within multiple agencies. To prevent duplication and to maximize utility, the NRC should be housed within one federal department, which then collaborates with other departments, agencies, commissions, offices, and non-governmental organizations.

The Academy greatly appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with the National Commission on Children and Disasters and looks forward to working with the Commission on the implementation of the recommendations in its recent report as well as the establishment of a NRC.

We encourage you to call upon the AAP for its expertise and assistance in the future work of the Commission and as the proposed NRC moves forward. If we may provide further information or answer any questions, please contact Tamar Magarik Haro in AAP's Washington, DC office at (202) 347-8600 or [tharo@aap.org](mailto:tharo@aap.org).

Sincerely,

O. Marion Burton, MD, FAAP  
President

OMB/tmh

cc Mr. David A. Hansell, Acting Assistant Secretary for Children and Families,  
Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human  
Services