

HSEMD Administrator Dave Miller

NATIONAL COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND DISASTERS

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6, 2010 at 11:45 a.m.

- We want to thank the Commission for making the trip to Iowa. We are honored that out of all the states recently impacted by disasters – the Commission chose Iowa as one of two places to gather information for its upcoming report on disaster reform to the Obama administration.
- It is our hope that Iowa's story will serve as a catalyst to reform disaster recovery policies so that the nation is better prepared for the next disaster.

- The goal of today's meeting is to make sure this Commission has an accurate picture of what has worked well – when it comes to children -- in the response and recovery from Iowa's worst natural disaster. We also want the Commission to understand the challenges we've encountered, what decisions we've made...and what roadblocks lie ahead.
- Every impacted community has responded to the floods and tornadoes of 2008 in different ways.
- For example...earlier today, the Commission met with school officials from Parkersburg, Waverly, New Hartford and Cedar Rapids

school districts. Each district had the chance to tell their recovery story... and what we heard differs from school to school. Some already had plans in place due to previous staff training, while others are currently revisiting their policies and plans for disaster preparedness.

- The same goes for communities...
- Some communities built new playgrounds to provide kids a place to play and establish a sense of normalcy. Other communities embraced their children by providing ample mental health and counseling services.

- One response is not better than the other...but it does show how varied recoveries can be, especially when it comes to kids.
- Rural communities can encounter much different scenarios than urban areas, but the issue still remains – how do we implement a response and recovery system that addresses everyone – including children – to the best of our ability?
- One way the State of Iowa improved its assistance was through the creation of the case management system. Before the 2008 disasters, Iowa did not have a statewide framework in place to help families get the

necessary help they needed. Now, we are looking at formalizing the case management system this upcoming legislative session – so the next time a disaster strikes, one-on-one assistance is available faster than ever before...meaning a better environment for children and hopefully, a quicker recovery for a family.

- It is steps like this which must be discussed and shared with our counterparts at the federal level to improve disaster recovery as a whole.
- Once again, I want to thank the Commission for coming to Cedar Rapids and meeting with Iowans who have lived and worked through

this disaster. We hope our story can assist the Commission with forming new recommendations, so that disaster response and recovery is even more inclusive of children's needs in the future.

- Thank you.