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National Commission on Children and Disasters Hails Obama Administration Initiatives

The Obama Administration announced today at a public meeting held by the National Commission on Children and Disasters that it is moving forward on initiatives to implement recommendations contained in the Commission's *2010 Report to the President and Congress*.

Dabney Kern, Senior Director, Response Policy, National Security, told the Commission that the White House has formed an interagency working group to regularly brief the National Security Staff and Domestic Policy Council on progress to improve care for children before, during and after disasters. The group also will focus on strengthening policies to meet housing assistance needs, speed the reunification of unaccompanied children, evacuate and transport children with disabilities and medical needs, address mental health needs, and improve school preparedness.

FEMA Administrator Craig Fugate indicated his support for incorporating children into the front-end of disaster planning and developing indicators that help states and communities measure how well they are meeting the needs of children.

HHS's Admiral Nicole Lurie, Assistant Secretary for Preparedness and Response (ASPR), and David Hansell, Acting Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), provided details about the Children's HHS Interagency Leadership on Disasters (CHILD) Working Group. For example, ASPR is incorporating children into each step of the medical countermeasure development process and is working to train first responders in basic psychological first aid when caring for children. ACF just released guidelines to state child care administrators to bolster emergency planning, which will be supplemented by training and technical assistance.

"The President and his Administration are commended for taking concrete steps to plan for children," said Mark Shriver, Chairperson of the National Commission on Children and Disasters. "As the devastation in Japan reminds us, disasters can strike without warning. The Administration's commitment to accountability ensures that it will be ever vigilant about meeting the needs of children before, during and after disasters."

The Commission is an independent, bipartisan body established by Congress and the President to identify gaps in disaster preparedness, response and recovery for children, and make recommendations to close the gaps.

To view the *2010 Report to the President and Congress* go to www.childrenanddisasters.acf.hhs.gov.