



## National Commission on Children and Disasters



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### **Persistent Gaps and Shortfalls Haunt Children Left Behind by Disasters**

The National Commission on Children and Disasters continues to dig deeper into identifying the unmet needs of children, in an effort to bring national, state and local stakeholders to the table and work cooperatively to resolve lingering problems.

The Commission met recently to hear initial findings from three subcommittees formed to investigate specific areas of concern for children: operation of mass care shelters, disaster-specific pediatric medical training, and health and human services to children trying to recover from disasters. Each subcommittee brought together representatives from federal, state, local and non-governmental organization perspectives.

“We understand that the best way to identify gaps in services and propose practical solutions is to work hand in hand with the people responsible for taking care of children in disaster situations,” noted Chairperson Mark Shriver. “Our work will not take place in an ‘ivory tower’ with recommendations and mandates simply handed down from on high.”

In order to achieve its objectives, which includes an interim report due in October of this year and a final report in October 2010, the Commission is working closely with officials from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as organizations such as the American Red Cross, American Academy of Pediatrics and Louisiana Family Recovery Corps to uncover gaps in disaster preparation, response, and recovery as it relates to children. The Commission will continue to augment its subcommittee work by bringing on the expertise of educators, child mental health specialists, social workers, nurses, and state and local emergency managers.

“There is a wealth of knowledge already developed around how best to serve children affected by disasters, but it tends to exist in silos,” said Shriver. “Incorporating all of these perspectives and responsibilities into comprehensive disaster planning for children is a great challenge, but it is truly our mission,” Shriver concluded.

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