

## CQ HOMELAND SECURITY

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### **Children's Needs Should Receive Priority in Disaster Planning: Commission**

By Daniel Fowler, CQ Staff

The National Commission on Children and Disasters approved an interim report on Tuesday that makes recommendations to ensure children receive greater priority in disaster planning.

The report identifies several gaps in disaster preparedness, including issues at emergency shelters, medical and mental health clinics, schools and child care facilities, according to the news release.

The report's key recommendations include:

- Making children an immediate priority of White House and the Federal Emergency Management Agency planning.
- Adopting national standards for disaster planning at facilities that serve or house children, such as schools, group homes and juvenile justice centers.
- Adopting national standards to provide a safe and secure emergency shelter environment for children, including access to age-appropriate services and supplies.
- Requiring state child care regulatory agencies to include disaster planning in standards for receiving child care licenses.
- Including training in children's mental health and behavior in preparedness and response activities.

"The most vulnerable Americans in the most vulnerable settings are made even more vulnerable by government inaction," said the commission's chairman, Mark Shriver, in the release. The congressionally authorized commission will send the report to Congress and President Obama in the next few weeks, said Vinicia Mascarenhas, the panel's communications director. A final report is due in October 2010.

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