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## Appendix D. Children and Disasters: the Role of State and Local Governments in Protecting This Vulnerable Population

Children under the age of 18 comprise about 25 percent of our population and have unique needs when an emergency or disaster strikes.

The National Commission on Children and Disasters is a bipartisan, independent body authorized by Congress to examine children's needs as they relate to preparation for, response to, and recovery from all hazards, including major disasters and emergencies. The Commission reports its findings and recommendations to the President and Congress.

Children require specific recognition, planning, and coordination between Federal, State, tribal, and local governments, and their non-governmental disaster-relief partners. The Commission developed a framework of essential elements for State and local governments to consider when addressing children in their emergency plans.

- Determine the demographics of your child population (age 0-18), including children with disabilities and special health care needs.
- Identify places children will most likely be when under supervised care (school, pre-school, child care, summer camps, group homes, juvenile justice facilities).
- Include needs of children in disaster training, exercises, and equipment purchases.
- Evaluate performance in meeting needs of children during exercises/drills and in after-action reports.
- Designate a focal point of responsibility for coordinating children's needs.
- Design an evacuation plan that provides transportation for children with their families and caregivers, especially children with disabilities.
- Include child tracking and family reunification procedures in disaster plans.
- Provide safe, accessible shelter environments for children and families, including essential age-appropriate supplies and care for medically-dependent children.
- Develop capability of emergency personnel to provide effective pre-hospital pediatric transport and medical care (training and supplies).
- Develop capability of hospital emergency departments to provide effective care for children (training and supplies).
- Provide basic psychological first aid training for emergency personnel to assist children.

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- Support disaster plans, training, and drills for child congregate care providers that include evacuation, reunification, and addressing children with disabilities or chronic health needs.
  - Plan for establishing emergency child care.
  - Identify resources in county and surrounding counties to address a surge in children's needs, especially health and mental health needs.
  - Develop a long-term disaster recovery plan that addresses the needs of children and families (housing, schools, child care, health, and mental health).