

# Children and Disasters

Children experience trauma and fear during a natural disaster. If they know what to do during a disaster because they have practiced family disaster drills, they will be better off. When parents are calm, children calm down more quickly.



## Before a Disaster

- Familiarize yourself with the emergency response plans of schools and/or daycare your children attend.
- Find out if the school/daycare will keep your kids or send them home in an emergency.
- Help your child know how to get into your home if you are not there.
- Decide if your children take care of themselves or if a neighbor takes care of them.
- Develop and practice a family disaster plan.
- Teach children how to recognize danger signals.
- Explain how to call for help (9-1-1).
- Help children memorize important family information.
- Help children memorize their street address, not a P.O. Box.
- Include children's toys and special foods in a 72-hour kit.

Children are most afraid the disaster will happen again, someone will be hurt or killed, or that they will be separated from family and left alone.

## After a Disaster

- Keep the family together, do not leave children with relatives or friends – take children with you.
- Calmly and firmly explain the situation and your plans to children.
- Talk to your child at eye level.
- Encourage children to talk about the disaster and ask questions.
- Include children in recovery activities by giving them chores that will help them feel they are helping things get back to normal.
- Reassure children with firmness and love.
- Sympathize with and resolve their anxieties.
- Hold your children and spend more time with them.