

Key Planning Steps

Complete an Emergency Information Form (EIF) for your child

- An EIF is a list of your child's medical conditions, needs, communication difficulties, medications, and care providers. Visit [this resource page](#) for examples of an EIF.
- Ask your doctor to help you fill out your EIF and update it each year.
- Keep a paper copy with your child's supplies and take a photo of the EIF on your phone if you can.



Gather supplies your family will need in an emergency

- Consider items your family needs to survive for several days at home (e.g. food, water, supplies).
- Gather items you will need if you are forced to leave your home (e.g. medicine, headphones, tablet to keep your child calm) and keep them in an easy to carry container or "go bag."
- Review these items with your child's care team. For more information, visit [this resource page](#).



Create a family communication plan

- Plan and practice how your family will communicate if you are separated during an emergency.
- Write down contact information for your family and important people (e.g. doctors, care team, schools, service providers). Keep this information with your important documents and as a photo on your phone if you can.



Communicating During Emergencies



- Have your child wear some form of identification** (medical ID bracelet or necklace, or place a tag on your child's phone or shoe) with your child's name, medical conditions, and important contact information.

- Have your child carry a [Communication Card](#)** if they are non-verbal or has trouble communicating, to help others understand their needs.

- Teach your child simple statements** to use when communicating with first responders. Introduce your child to local first responders before a disaster.

- Alert neighbors and first responders if your child has a tendency to wander.** Review this [Autism Safety Kit](#) to help prevent wandering.

- If your child uses a device to communicate, **keep batteries or back-up chargers** in the event of a power outage.

- Talk with your child's school or daycare** about the plan for caring for your child if an emergency occurs while they are at school. Plan how you will connect with your child.

- Ask your child's specialists or speech therapists to help **build your child's vocabulary** for emergencies. [Social stories](#) can help your child learn what to expect in an emergency.



Be Ready for a Power Outage or an Evacuation



Keep these things handy in case you have to stay at home for several days without power:

- Things that help calm your child, such as favorite foods, clothing, blankets, games, and music
- Toys that can serve as a distraction
- Extra batteries for hand-held electronics and portable chargers (keep them charged)
- A car charger in case you can't power your devices at home

In case you have to **leave your home in an emergency**:

- **Keep a "go bag" ready** with things your child may need:
 - Your child's EIF, Communication Card, and copies of medical insurance cards
 - Your child's medications
 - Items to help with sensory sensitivities (e.g., headphones, ear plugs, sunglasses, hoodies)
 - Favorite toys, activities, and food
 - Tablet or hand-held gaming device with batteries
 - Other items that help comfort your child
- **Plan for where you will go** – ask family or friends in advance if you can stay with them, or plan to go to a hotel or shelter. Ideally, evacuate somewhere familiar to your child to help keep things as normal as possible.
- **Practice your evacuation plan** with your family often – at least once every six months.



Helping Your Child Cope

Before

- Review and practice your plan with your child. This will increase your child's confidence and sense of control.
- Introduce your child to local first responders at community events or a station visit to help your child get more comfortable and help responders communicate with your child.

During

- Plan for activities that can keep your child occupied and help their routine from getting disrupted.
- Consider comfort foods, toys, or other items that help keep them calm or reduce sensory overload.
- Your child may be frightened and may need help understanding what is happening. Check out [these resources](#) that help you talk with your child about disasters.

After

- Give your child a chance to talk about what they went through and were feeling as they are able.
- Look out for any changing behaviors and discuss any changes with your child's doctors/therapists.



Questions About Planning for Your Child's Unique Needs?



Your child's doctors and care team know your child and can help you plan for their unique needs during a disaster. Here are some good questions to discuss with them:

- How do I get an emergency supply of medications for my child?
- How can I help my child stay calm and accommodate their sensory needs?
- How might disruption of services and therapies affect my child?
- What steps should my family take to ensure consistent support for my child?
- What are some behavior changes I could expect to see?
- How can I connect with other parents who have children with similar needs?

Additional Resources [Available](#)

- Local information resource guide
- Checklists for other special medical needs
- What to expect at an emergency shelter