

2024-2029

Disaster Plan

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DISASTER PLAN INDEX

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This plan can be found by going to the ND Department of Health and Human Services website

<https://www.hhs.nd.gov/cfs/publications-children-and-family-services>

Introduction

The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-288) mandates that State child welfare agencies develop disaster plans that include how they will do the following:

- Identify, locate, and continue the availability of services for children under State care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster;
- Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases;
- Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster;
- Preserve essential program records;
- Coordinate services and share information with other States

Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP)

North Dakota has developed and implemented the Emergency Disaster Preparedness Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan to provide disaster preparedness instruction to foster care providers and adoptive families and children under the custody of a North Dakota public agency. This comprehensive and effective plan is to first and most importantly, ensures the safety, permanency, and well-being of our youth. Second, by having a plan North Dakota will be in full compliance with federal and state mandates.

The North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Children and Family Services has an obligation to the clients served to perform its essential functions efficiently during periods of disruption. When emergencies or other situations arise that disrupt HHS operations, HHS will activate the COOP to continue essential functions. This plan has been developed in accordance with guidance in Executive Order (EO) 12656. The Department uses an all-hazards approach in its disaster preparedness planning process.

Types of Disasters

Natural and man-made disasters come in many forms and may dramatically overwhelm North Dakota's current welfare services service system. This plan is specific to response when one of the three levels of disasters occur.

1. Destruction of the North Dakota ND Department of Health and Human Services vault in the state capitol or the Children and Family Services office located on Divide Ave in Bismarck, ND.
2. Destruction of all or some level of the two data management systems that hold all of the pertinent ND child welfare data; Comprehensive Child Welfare Information and Payment System (CCWIPS) or FRAME.
3. Natural disasters impacting our outlying counties, facilities, and foster homes causing excess loss of life or property damage due to unforeseen destruction by floods, tornados, high winds, power outages, winter and summer storms, etc.

Disaster Preparedness Process

ND Department of Health and Human Services, Children and Family Services, Human Service Zones (counties), providers, professionals and other partners play an important role in preparing and responding to the safety and well-being of children and families during a disaster. ND follows this developed plan in an effort to protect vulnerable children and families during the disaster and for direction in moving forward after a disaster.

1. Initiation of Disaster Plan
2. Provider Identification and Locating
3. Communication Protocols
4. Training for state and custodial agency professionals

Initiation of Disaster Plan

The CFS director, or designee, will activate the CFS Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan and work in tandem with the HHS Disaster Preparedness Administrator and assigned CFS Field Service Specialists. If a disaster occurs, the COOP is initiated, and information is disseminated immediately to the field by Children & Family Services.

Provider Information & Locating

Children and Family Services (CFS) has established a system for gathering and providing information on foster care providers in the event they are caring for a child under public custody and they become unexpectedly displaced. Since January 2009, all foster care providers must outline disaster evacuation plans (SFN 1037) that consider primary and secondary planning. At the time of licensing and relicensing, applicants disclose and update their plan, which is made part of the 'licensing file'.

Adoption Placements:

Children in pre-adopt placement are still under the custody and supervision of a public agency; Human Service Zone or Tribal Nation. In the event of an emergency, the custodian of the child is responsible for maintaining contact with the adoptive families. Adults Adopting Special Kids (AASK) is the contracted vendor for adoptive placements. AASK maintains a database of active families, which includes disaster evacuation procedures specific to each active adoptive family.

Foster Care Placements:

Children in foster care placement are under the custody and supervision of a public agency; Human Service Zone, DJS or Tribal Nation. In the event of an emergency, the custodian of the child is responsible for maintaining contact with the foster care provider or caregiver to the child. CFS Licensing Unit requires each licensed foster care provider to complete the disaster plan details on the SFN 1037. CFS Licensing Unit employees have access to the file in Sharepoint and can access emergency contact information at any time, while also sorting families by county, city, etc.

North Dakota Administrative Code (NDAC) 75-03-40 requires Qualified Residential Treatment Programs to have written plans and procedures for meeting disasters and emergencies. A facility must have written plans and procedures for meeting disasters and emergencies. Employees must know all plans and procedures for meeting disasters and emergencies. The facility shall advise children in placement and their custodial agency of all emergency and evacuation procedures upon admission to the facility.

Foster care providers are required to follow the communication protocols and will have access to the CFS telephone numbers and email address for ongoing updates and feedback.

Communication

The CFS director, or specified designee, will activate the CFS COOP and work in tandem with the HHS Disaster Preparedness Administrator and CFS Field Service Specialists to develop processes that are specific to each region so as to respond to the disaster utilizing the appropriate services in that particular region/area. Children and Family Services in direct communication with the HHS Executive Office and Risk Management partners with the following state agencies: Department of Agriculture, Department of Public Instruction, Environmental Quality Departments, Department of Justice and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Disaster and Emergency Services, Military Affairs, Labor and Industry Departments, Department of Commerce, Department of Revenue and Department of Transportation, the Red Cross, Salvation Army, local, state and regional disaster directors, Homeland Security and other private and professional agencies and associations.

No one can predict when and where a disaster may strike. It is even more difficult to plan for every scenario to produce the best possible outcome to get through such tragic events. ND has established this basic flow chart of communication and contacts that will assist in the event of a disaster.

1. CFS Administration (Case Management, Licensing and Adoption) all have direct communication access (phone and email) to public custodians; Human Service Zone, DJS and Tribal Nations (IV-E cases). Children in placement can be tracked through our data management system, FRAME. A report can be generated through this system which will outline the placement resource for all children by county of residence under public custody.
2. CFS Field Service Specialists are a primary connection between the local Human Service Zone, Division of Juvenile Services or Tribal Nation as the child's public custodian. Each Field Service Specialist has a list of cases they offer technical assistance for in their service area, as well as emergency contact information of the public agency case manager.
3. CFS Licensing Unit has access to all licensed foster care providers and the ability to sort families from a geographic area and identify if they have a placement in their home, etc. if new need to get ahold of a family. The SFN 1037 has identified emergency contacts and locations where they would go in the event of an emergency. In addition, our unit has a centralized email inbox (cfslicensing@nd.gov) and phone call center (701-328-2322).
4. Press releases addressing a state disaster will be generated from the Department of Homeland Security/ND Department of Emergency Services, Public Information Office or a Joint Information Center (JIC). There is a website available to provide emergency information to foster care providers that will be initiated when and if a disaster plan is required.
5. Child Protection Services will continue to deliver services through the local agency, with backup support from other North Dakota Field Service Specialists and CPS Intake Unit.
6. During any disaster, the CFS COOP (Division Director, CFS Management Team and Interstate Compact Administrator) will remain available through phone and electronic forms of communication to coordinate services and share information with appropriate parties.
7. The department has two measures in which providers and families can contact the Department to report a disaster or evacuation. CFS Central Office email address dhscfs@nd.gov and **1-800-245-3736** and **701-328-2316** as well as CFS Licensing Unit email address at cfslicensing@nd.gov and **701-328-2322**. The following message has been placed on the two designated telephone numbers: *You have reached Children & Family Services of the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services. If you are a foster care provider or adoptive*

family who has been displaced as a result of a disaster, please leave your telephone number and current address, as well as the name of the child or children currently with you. We will contact you as soon as possible.

8. Emergency Communication to Human Service Zone's: HHS can access Assurance NM as the emergency notification system used by the State of North Dakota and the Department of Health and Human Services to provide important information to our team members.
9. Information/System Security: NDIT provides direction and technical expertise to all Department Sections and facilities to ensure the Department's IT Resources are used appropriately and in accordance with Department and NDIT policies and procedures. This includes protecting the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of Department information and the systems that handle the information. The Department encourages the proper use of its IT Resources for conducting Department business as an effective and efficient tool within the framework of applicable federal and state laws, federal regulations, administrative rules, and Department policies. Users of Department IT Resources hold positions of trust both in preserving the security and confidentiality of Department information and in safeguarding Department IT Resources. Any potential loss of Department information or IT Resource availability can have a significant impact on the Department's ability to fulfill its mission. The requirements outlined in this policy are to assist users in understanding the expectations with regard to appropriate use, and consequently will help minimize some of the risks that are inherent with the daily use of Department IT Resources.

If a disaster has occurred anywhere in North Dakota, Children and Family Services (CFS) staff will immediately follow up on all voice messages left or emails received. Depending upon the extent of the disaster, CFS staff is prepared to provide 24-7 staff coverage to manage phone lines and needs. A Sharepoint list of impacted families will be started and managed as determined reasonable and necessary by the COOP Team.

The child welfare case management system, FRAME, contains placement information on all children in foster care. This system can be accessed by Human Service Zone, DJS and CFS employees. Although there are limits as to what information Zones and DJS have access to, CFS can view all cases with full statewide access in FRAME.

Training

Training for state and local offices is determined based on the locality of the agency, local approaches to agency structure for detailed disasters, inclusive of drills for fire, tornado, storms, active shooter, etc. Foster care providers receive training on emergency response as part of the PRIDE training module, and fire safety in person and web based online training is available. HHS can choose to develop a team to train state and local offices in disaster preparedness and is a direct liaison to the North Dakota Department of Emergency Services, an agency that provides 24/7 emergency communications and resource coordination with more than 50 lead and support agencies, private enterprise, and voluntary organizations to assist local jurisdictions in disaster and emergency response activities. Training is ongoing and updated when necessary.

CFS Administrators have access to the Disaster Plan which is also posted on the department's website. This information is disseminated annually and shared at the time of a new hire at CFS. CFS will participate in mock drills to better prepare for a disaster.

Foster care providers and adoptive parents may be given an "Emergency North Dakota Foster Care Call In" card at the time of licensure or re-licensure as well as have emergency information and agency contacts available to them in the [Foster Care Provider Handbook](#)

North Dakota Court System

If a disaster has occurred in any region of North Dakota involving children in foster care under the jurisdiction of the North Dakota Court System, a protocol between the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services and the North Dakota Court System has been developed. A master list of all displaced children and their location, compiled by the CFS Licensing Unit Administrator, will be sent to the Juvenile Court Director located in the region the disaster has occurred.

Records Preservation

Permanent archived adoption records are stored either on microfiche (prior to 1990) or in electronic storage. Electronic records are on the state's server system which is backed up daily and stored off-site. Servers are in a secure location and access is monitored.

Children & Family Services Function

North Dakota is a state supervised, county administered state. ND HHS Children and Family Services (CFS) supervises all activity in ND child welfare. CFS is responsible to facilitate the creation of the designated CFS Continuity of Operations (COOP) team. CFS will collaborate with emergency personnel, state emergency agencies to best accommodate comfort in knowledge and understanding of expectations during the emergency. CFS will observe all mandates regarding state and federal requirements, including report completion, grant management and information system oversight. ND Department of Health and Human Services recognizes that critical incident stress debriefing may be needed. Should the disaster leave personnel requiring assistance in coping with the tragedy, personnel will be offered debriefing groups and /or counseling. CFS administration will also determine which staff and essential services are needed to be dispatched to the disaster affected area.

Disaster Follow-Up

The ability of the stakeholders to carry out the disaster plan will be evaluated, as well as CFS's ability to obtain assistance from designated partners. Administration will review all information available stemming from the disaster. An assigned team will determine if policies and/or the disaster plan needs to be revised or if new policies need to be written, to adequately address future disasters.

ND Disaster Response

The Disaster Plan is intended to offer clarity to foster care providers and adoptive families surrounding who to call and when. In addition, exposes the collaborative effort of various agencies who partner when natural disaster strikes, and North Dakota is in a position to respond and support families and caregivers.

ND Disaster Recovery

After a disaster, Children and Family Services will work diligently to ensure disaster planning includes specific information about how to address any child, family, provider and staff emotional trauma. In addition, coordination with service providers and community agencies will occur to ensure appropriate referrals are made to support the emotional wellbeing of children and families impacted by the disaster.

**CFS Disaster Plan
Provider Call In & Email Notification**

**FOSTER CARE PROVIDER &
ADOPTIVE FAMILY PLACEMENT
DISPLACED DUE TO DISASTER?**

CALL IN ASAP

**In the event that you must evacuate your
foster/adopt home, please call or e-mail your
location to the legal custodian or licensing agency at
(701)-_____,**

or, the

**ND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES**

701-328-2316 or 701-328-2322

dhscfs@nd.gov or cfslicensing@nd.gov

Full disaster plan is viewable by going to the ND Department of Health and Human Services
website location: <https://www.hhs.nd.gov/cfs/publications-children-and-family-services>

FOSTER CARE PROVIDERS

SFN 1037 <https://www.nd.gov/eforms?sfntitle=1037#searchResults>

SECTION D - FAMILY EVACUATION DISASTER PLAN

Evacuation planning is required for all licensed foster parents in the event there is reason to leave your home due to a natural disaster or catastrophic event. Indicate emergency contact information below:

Emergency Contact #1

Contact				
Address		City	State	ZIP Code
Telephone Number	Cell Phone Number	Email Address		
Additional Contact Information				

Emergency Contact #2

Contact				
Address		City	State	ZIP Code
Telephone Number	Cell Phone Number	Email Address		
Additional Contact Information				

Evacuation Location

Type			
<input type="checkbox"/> Hotel <input type="checkbox"/> Relative's Home <input type="checkbox"/> Lake Cabin <input type="checkbox"/> Other			
Contact Name			
Address	City	State	ZIP Code

I understand that there are critical items I am urged to take with me when we evacuate. These may include:

- Agency contact information (e.g. agency emergency contact number.)
- Child information (e.g. prescriptions, recent medical reports, physician's name and contact information, immunization history).
- I understand that in the event that I must evacuate my home, I am required to report my location to the legal custodian, licensing agent or the North Dakota of Human Services, CFS Licensing Unit.
- I understand that if any of the information included in this plan changes, I am to update the legal custodian, licensing agent or the North Dakota Department of Human Services within 7 days of the change.

SECTION E - YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE DRIVING

Foster parents must review the pamphlet, [DN 271](#), "Motor Vehicle Operation by Youth in Foster Care" at the time of initial licensure, annual licensure, and as needed thereafter. Below is the notice/acknowledgment the foster parent(s) received and understand the information.

- ☐ I have reviewed the pamphlet "Motor Vehicle Operation by Youth in Foster Care" which outlines the North Dakota Department of Human Services policy related to the operation of motor vehicles by youth in foster care.
- ☐ I understand the policy related to the operation of motor vehicles by youth in foster care.
- ☐ By checking this box and typing my name below, I/we am signing this document electronically. I/we agree that my electronic signature is the legal equivalent of my manual/handwritten signature. I/we agree that the electronic signature appearing on this document has the same validity and enforceability as a handwritten signature.

Signature	Date
Signature	Date

Historical Disaster Plan Use 2020 - 2024

2019: North Dakota was presented with flooding in the spring of 2019, ND activated the State Recovery Multi-Agency Coordination Center, led by the state Agriculture Commissioner, the NDDDES Director, the NDDDES Homeland Security Director and the State Engineer, who provided direction to help communities with recovery efforts. Significant flooding impacted families across North Dakota and required a government approach to helping citizens of our state and ensuring child welfare agencies, providers and clients were served and assisted. State assessments indicated that damage in the 21 counties would exceed \$9.2 million, with an additional \$2 million in damage, which remained underwater. The North Dakota Department of Transportation also reported damages totaling \$29.7 million to Federal Aid System (FAS) to fix roads.

2020: Worldwide pandemic of COVID-19 effected the nation. North Dakota created a website of <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/index.html>. The State of North Dakota, led by the Governor's office produced daily press conferences and several COVID resource guidelines, documents, and other related information for clients, stakeholders and staff. The North Dakota Department of Human Services worked and is continuing to navigate the risks and concerns with COVID-19. The Department is committed to delivering on its mission of serving people in need across the state of North Dakota. Service delivery locations remained open and continued to serve clients; more virtual and distance learning opportunities available to clients. A series of FAQ documents were made available: <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/info/covid-19/provider-qa.html>

2021: Unprecedented dry winter. The Disaster Plan was not utilized for weather related impacts, rather to review protocol related to the world-wide health pandemic (COVID-19) which led to economic disaster for residents across the nation.

2022: Record high snowfall and blizzard conditions in mid-April, which led to additional and unpredicted ground flooding and flash floods in cities and towns across North Dakota. It is typical for the Red River in eastern North Dakota, along the Minnesota boarder to flood, but it is not as common for the Pembina River (Neche, ND), Sheyenne River (Lisbon and Carrington, ND). CFS did not experience any families who were displaced, but rather able to hold out the storm and maintain dry homes.

2023: Record high snowfall across majority of North Dakota. CFS did not experience any families who were displaced, but rather able to hold out the storm and maintain dry homes. In May, 2023 Governor Burgum asked the federal government for a Major Disaster declaration stating, "Within the past five years, North Dakota has received eight federally declared disaster declarations with our most recent being the November 2022 ice storm. The state had a particularly challenging winter, falling within 0.4 inches of the record average statewide snowfall and breaking snowfall records in the central portions of the state. North Dakota requested a major disaster declaration various counties impacted with \$4.1 million in damages".

2024: A December winter ice storm affected large parts of North Dakota causing more than \$11.5 million dollars in damage over 13 counties. Freezing rain and 40 mile per hour winds destroyed more than 2,000 power poles and knocked out power to more than 20,000 customers. The ice storm forced sections of interstate highways to close, including from Grand Forks to the Canadian border. Federal funding was made available to state, tribal, and eligible local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations on a cost-sharing basis for emergency work and the repair or replacement of facilities damaged by the severe winter.

In addition to this plan, ND Department of Health and Human Services manage response plans; updated and revised periodically. A site with various plans can be referenced at: [HHS Disaster Plan](#).

Plan Amendment - 2025

North Dakota Disaster Plan Overview

Disasters in North Dakota are continuous, but that does not stop our communities from standing strong and remaining adaptable. Efforts to ensure the safety and security of North Dakota citizens are always ongoing but was specifically shown historically with extreme and variable weather events causing substantial damage.

As noted on the previous page, several rounds of precipitation hit the state producing snow, rain, and freezing rain creating thick layers of ice accumulations on critical electrical infrastructure. In addition, the ND Watch Center and NDDDES coordinated a response to the Missouri River Ice Jam from February 28th to March 1st, 2024. On February 28, 2024, an ice jam began forming at the confluence of the Heart and Missouri Rivers between Bismarck and Mandan.

In October 2024, the state deployed resources to manage wild land fires which occurred in the western part of North Dakota.

Given the nature of the North Dakota climate and local supports, there was no need to formally utilize the ND Disaster plan in this past year. However, formal changes were made to the ND Disaster Plan included providing clarity to the process for how we manage adoptive families, which is inclusive of the custodial agency case worker.