

American Households Not Prepared for Disasters, Not Confident That Children's Needs Will be Met

After more than a decade of disasters, little change in disaster preparedness

LIVE WEBINAR featuring a new study by Columbia University

NEW YORK, NY (February 9, 2016) – Today, the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University's Earth Institute releases results from its national survey of American households to determine the current state of opinions and attitudes on preparedness for children in disasters and their community. The survey is part of the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative which is led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute and Save the Children, and funded by a grant from GSK. For the event homepage and to join the live webinar at 12:00 PM EST, please go to <http://bit.ly/rcrcdata16>.

Key findings include:

- Nearly two thirds (65%) of American households do not have adequate plans and supplies for a disaster. This is virtually unchanged from 2011 (66%) and represents only a modest improvement from since 2003 (77%).
- 41% are not confident that their community has adequate plans in place for a disaster that occurs with no warning, a slight improvement from 2011 (47%).
- 51% are not confident in the ability of government to meet the needs of children in a disaster and 37% are not confident in their community's ability to meet the needs of children.
- 35% of households with children are not familiar with their schools' evacuation and emergency plans, and 41% do not know to what location their children would be evacuated.

The survey also identified that while Americans are generally less prepared and less confident in the response of government, they still have high expectations for a quick response and recovery when disasters do strike.

Dr. Irwin Redlener, Director of NCDP and Professor, Health Policy and Management, Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, said "We are experiencing a continuous increase in the number of extreme weather events, and 10 years after Hurricane Katrina and three years after Superstorm Sandy, the vast majority of Americans remain unprepared for major disasters." According to Dr. Redlener, "What we've also found is that many parents are not confident that their children would be protected and are not aware of what plans schools have made to be sure that children are safe in case of a catastrophic event in their community. This should be a wake-up call for elected officials and policy makers."

"This survey provides important insights into public perceptions and expectations in a disaster," said Jeff Schlegelmilch, NCDP Deputy Director and the study's Principal Investigator. "Emergency planners at all levels should take note of these findings, and see them as an opportunity to re-think how we engage families and children-serving institutions in preparedness," he added.

"The survey conducted by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness shows how underprepared we are to protect children in disasters," said Erin Bradshaw, Senior Director, Emergency Preparedness for Save the Children. "Unless we make child-focused preparedness a priority, in our homes, schools and communities, we are putting our youngest, most vulnerable citizens in jeopardy. There are simple things we can do as parents and caregivers—identifying emergency contacts, making a plan and talking to children about that plan- that can ultimately help keep boys and girls safe."

The survey was administered as a random digital dial survey of 1,048 households across the United States and was conducted between November 30, 2015 and December 14, 2015. This national survey builds on prior surveys deployed by NCDP as part of the American Preparedness Project (<http://ncdp.columbia.edu/research/preparedness-attitudes-behaviors/>).

Work is currently underway to address community preparedness with specific focus on the needs of children. The Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative will develop a replicable model of child-focused community resilience planning that can be brought to national scale. This is being accomplished by developing two pilot programs in counties in New York and Arkansas and establishing a national panel of experts to link the community work with national preparedness priorities. The Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative, led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute and Save the Children, is funded by a grant from GSK. For more information, please visit <http://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc>.

About NCDP

The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Earth Institute works to understand and improve the nation's capacity to prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. NCDP focuses on the readiness of governmental and non-governmental systems; the complexities of population recovery; the power of community engagement; and the risks of human vulnerability, with a particular focus on children. For more information, please visit <http://ncdp.columbia.edu/>.

About Save the Children

Save the Children invests in childhood – every day, in times of crisis and for our future. In the United States and around the world, we are dedicated to ensuring every child has the best chance for success. Our pioneering programs give children a healthy start, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. Our advocacy efforts provide a voice for children who cannot speak for themselves. As the leading expert on children, we inspire and achieve lasting impact for millions of the world's most vulnerable girls and boys. By transforming children's lives now, we change the course of their future and ours. Save the Children encourages all families to not wait until it's too late, make a plan to Get Ready Get Safe: www.savethechildren.org/GetReady.

About GSK

GSK, one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical and healthcare companies, is committed to improving the quality of human life by enabling people to do more, feel better and live longer. For further information, go to us.gsk.com, follow us on twitter.com/GSKUS or visit our blog at www.morethanmedicine.us.gsk.com/blog/.

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