

# Organizational Response to COVID-19: Strategic Risk Communication and Community Partnerships

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PUERTO RICO  
CHILDREN  
& YOUTH TASK  
FORCE

INSTITUTO DEL  
DESARROLLO DE  
LA JUVENTUD

Founded by the Children and Families Administration, Save the Children and promoted by the Institute for Youth Development

**Puerto Rico Children  
and Youth Task Force**  
(since 2017,  
multisectoral)

**Economic security and  
long-term recovery**

**Preparedness**

**Goal**

Young people between 15- 25 years old,  
especially those with children between  
the ages of 0-5, have economic security.

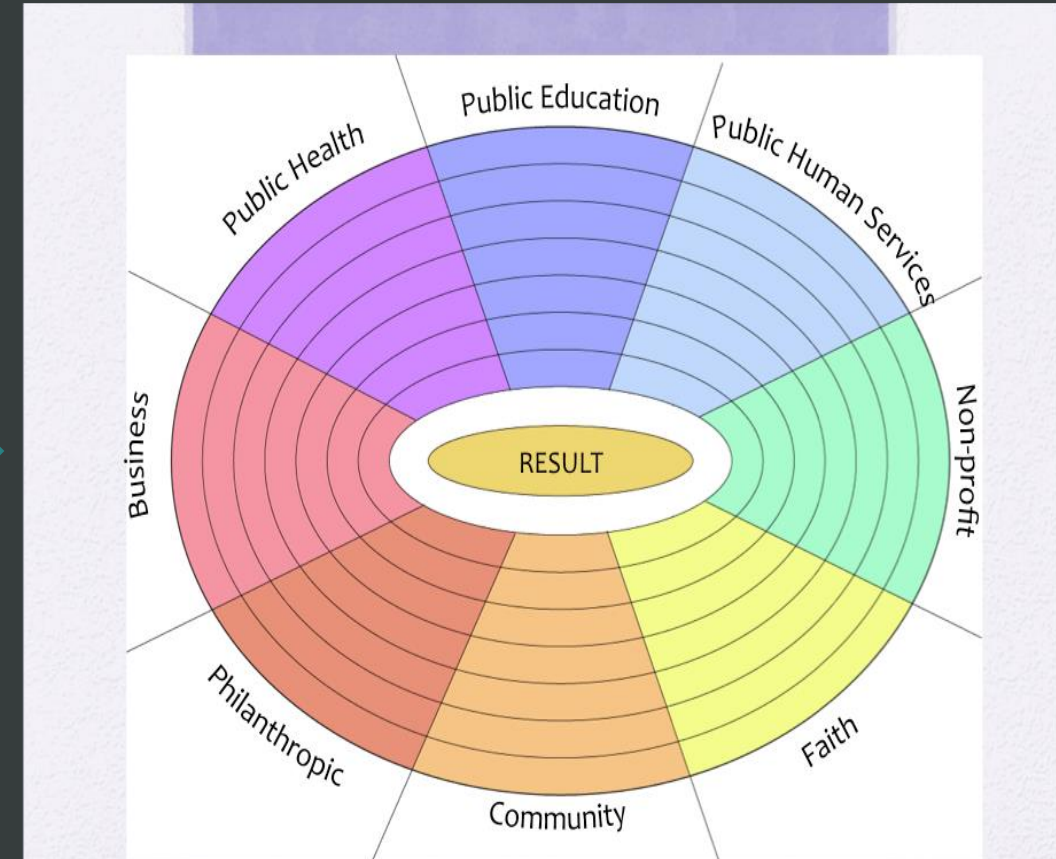
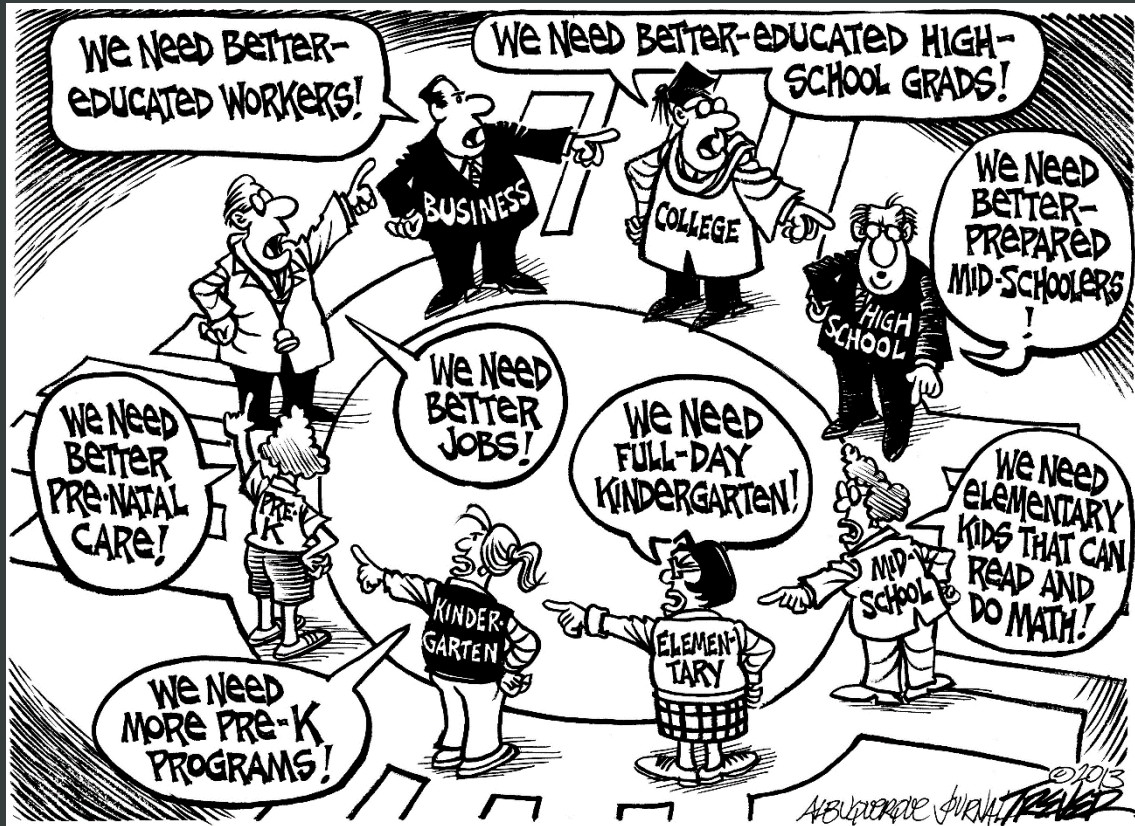
**Initiative with Columbia University**

Resilient Children / Resilient  
Communities in the Mayaguez and  
Humacao regions

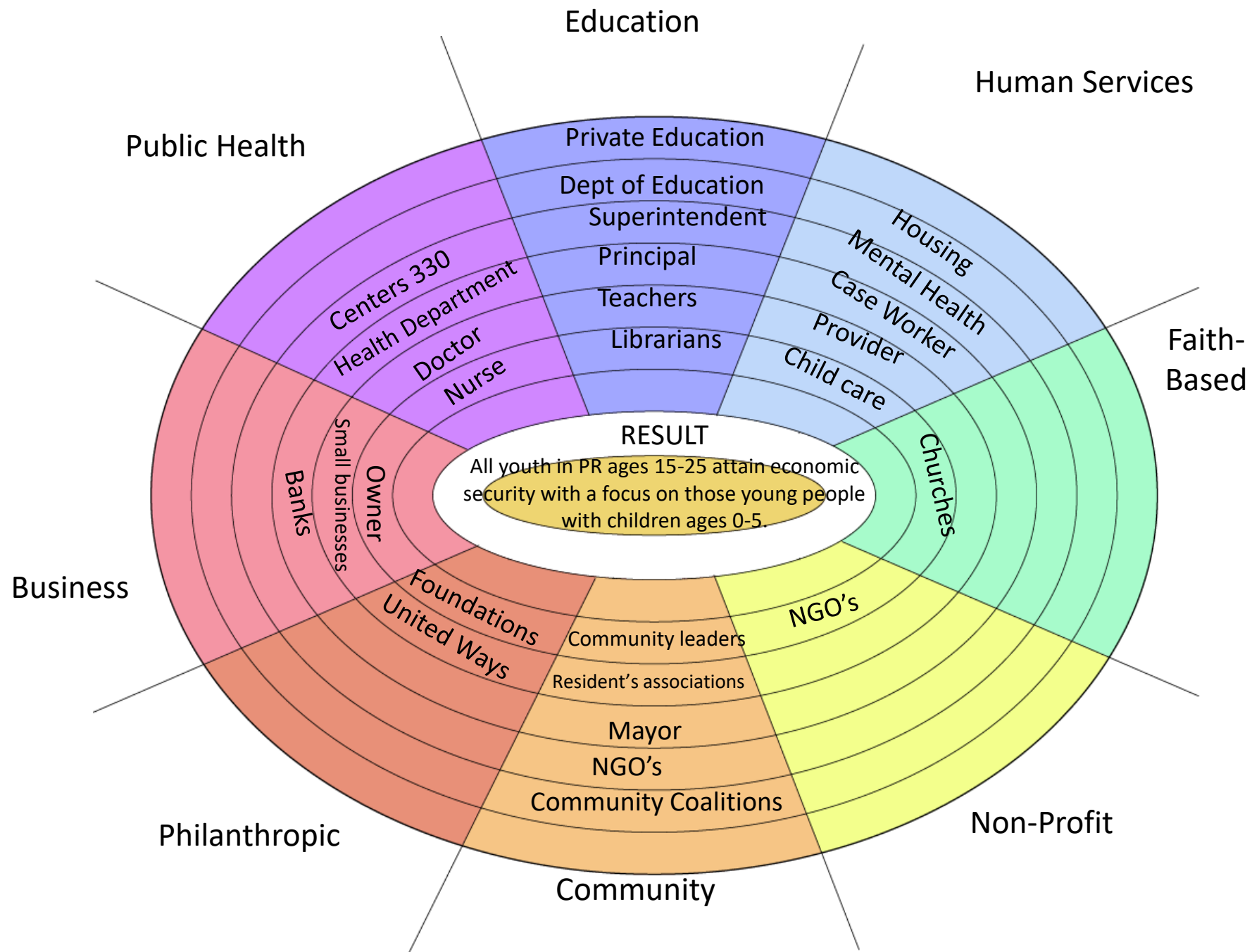
Poverty as the root problem of some of the complications after Hurricane Maria and the recovery process  
Importance of working with two generations

From the individual to the  
collective

# From the individual to the collective approach



The role cannot be exclusive to 1 organization/agency. There must be other contributing entities and the role of each must be specified. **Responsibility is collective.**



# Indicators

Indicators	Baseline Data - 2017	Target 2024
Disconnected Youth (neither at school nor working)	12.1%	10%
Outside of labor participation (neither working nor looking for employment)	67.1%	59%
Youth who are not in the workforce	60%	51.9%
Employed youth	20.7%	25%
Youth earning more than minimum wage	16.3%	19%

Economic security and long-term recovery

Ensure that young fathers and mothers...

**Complete** high school and **access post-secondary education**

Receive **high-quality post-secondary education**

Receive high-quality **job training**

Can **connect with and maintain jobs** that lead them to economic mobility

# Achievements

- Puerto Rico, for the first time, receives federal competition funds from the Child Care Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDGB-5)
  - Following approval, a steering group, which includes members of the PRCYTF, has given support. Currently, a needs assessment is being carried out to later prepare the strategic plan. This will allow expansion of the development services offered at an early age and improvement in the quality of the services. This, understanding that access to these services constitutes a barrier on many occasions for our young fathers and mothers to work or study.
- Support WIOA to integrate evidence into its Request for Proposals processes
  - Development of demonstrative and innovative programs to improve the economic security of young people.



This approach has enabled:

- The establishment of partnerships between organizations
- Commitment to work in coordination with other core organizations in mutual reinforcement activities and implement different components of action plans.

# Resilient Children/Resilient Communities

National Center for  
Disaster Preparedness  
EARTH INSTITUTE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



# 2019 Year in Review

RESILIENT CHILDREN / RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

**6**

COMMUNITY  
COALITIONS

**300+**

LOCAL STAFF &  
VOLUNTEERS

**57**

NEW RCRC TOOLBOX  
RESOURCES

**27+**

THOUSAND  
CHILDREN  
SERVED

**135**

ORGANIZATIONS  
WITH PREPAREDNESS  
ACTIVITIES

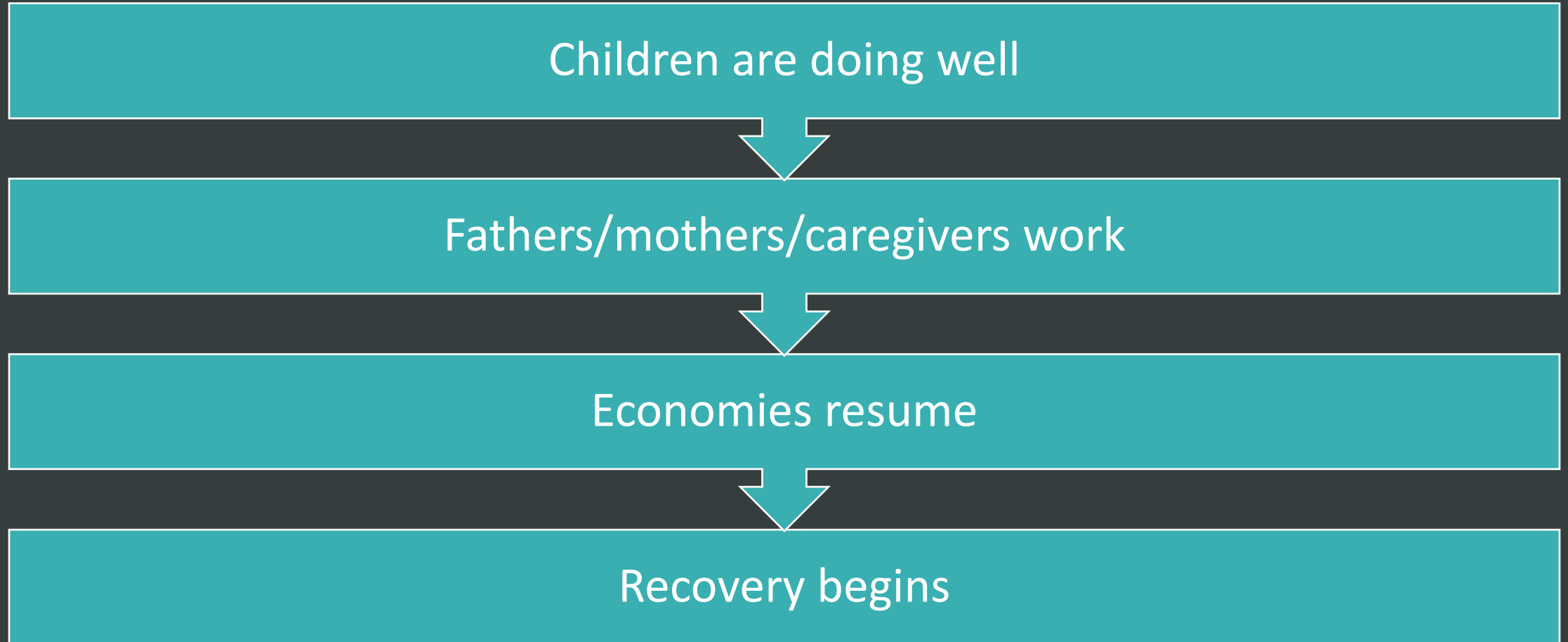
The data shown here represents the reach that six active community coalitions have in protecting the needs of children before, during, and after a disaster. They have exemplified the impact of community participation as the RCRC initiative enters the second phase by extending into areas recovering from disasters.

National Center for  
Disaster Preparedness  
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Coalitions in: Mayaguez, Humacao; New Hanover and Robeson County in North Carolina; Washington County, Arkansas; and Putnam County, New York

# Building preparedness- and child-focused community resilience



# Regions



Mayagüez

- Añasco, Cabo Rojo, Guánica, Hormigueros, Lajas, Maricao, **Mayagüez**, Sábana Grande and San Germán.

Humacao

- Ceiba, **Culebra**, Fajardo, Juncos, Las Piedras Maunabo, Naguabo, Vieques and Yabucoa.

**\*\*Multisectoral**

# Community Preparedness Index (institutional level)

## Sectors to which the CPI was administered (2018)

- **Who cares for children during the day/night?**
  - Care Centers
  - Public Schools
  - Private Schools
  - Temporary homes
- **Where could the children be during an emergency?**
  - Emergency Shelters
  - Hospitals
- **Who coordinates all sectors during a disaster?**
  - Community-scale organizations
- **Who determines the standards?**
  - Principal Organizations

## Purpose

- Tool to measure progress
- Determine/assess how prepared the community is to serve children before, during, and after a disaster
- It is a snapshot of the development of policies and protocols to protect your children at a certain time.
- Each sector receives a numerical score and, in turn, the region receives a unique score (average)
- Results are presented in a Preparedness Workshop

# Priorities Identified in the Regions

## Priorities

Map the risks and vulnerabilities/needs of children

Develop inventory of services for children

Involve community leaders in preparing and promoting volunteering

Update emergency shelter plans to include child-friendly spaces and other considerations for children and families

Promote community activities on physical and emotional preparedness for children

# Pilot Project

- Development of a guide to strengthen emergency management plans in child care centers, along with the Department of Family (ACUDEN, ADFAN, Licensing)
  - Meetings at the central level



# Community Partnerships in times of COVID-19

# Challenges in the face of COVID-19

Both the organizations that provide or coordinate services and the population that receives them are, to some extent, experiencing challenges related to:

- Risk of spreading or infecting others with the virus, death
- Managing uncertainty and understanding what's going on, anxiety, stress, physical and emotional exhaustion (yours and others)
- Isolation, curfew
- Access to services provided by the government and mistrust
- How to deal with the new routines, telework, education, coexistence, and housework
- Lack of technological knowledge or equipment, adequate internet connection
- Lack or loss of income
- Discontinuation of medical or mental health treatments
- Disasters occurring concurrently
- Medium- and long-term consequences aside from trauma during and after, including the beginning of hurricane season

In terms of organizations/entities/agencies, failure to provide services means that populations that have already been vulnerable due to a lack of access, resources and opportunities are deprived and even more vulnerable.

**Economic security**

**Access to food**

**Access to education**

**Shelter**

**Violence-free environments**

**Mental health services**

## Some ways to deal with these challenges:


- Organizations, and especially those that offer direct services, are “our ears on the ground”
  - Diversify services to fit the context, including how to delivery them
    - Support lines
    - Virtual tools (videos, support groups, tutorials, webinars)
    - Increase in the frequency of contact with participants through various ways (phone, apps)

# In the midst of the crisis, opportunities arise. What we are doing...

- **Virtual meetings**
  - Impact of COVID-19 on plans
  - Increased frequency
  - Updates | @venting@
- **Capacity building**
  - Coordination of activities
    - Continuity of Operations Plan
  - Webinar series
  - Compassion fatigue
- **Collecting concerns and needs**
  - Collecting and sharing tools
  - Developing tools
- **Strengthen communication and relationships between organizations**
  - Central and regional levels
    - Response plan
- **Solidarity** – distance is physical, closeness is social

# Toolbox

## Resilient Children / Resilient Communities



HOMEABOUT US :TOOLBOX :CONTACT US

ENGLISH | ESPAÑOL

### Prepared Communities Are Resilient Communities

Children rely on many people and organizations across a community, every day. Preparing these institutions makes our children and communities more resilient. #safekids Learn more about the RCRC Initiative in this [video](#).

### The RCRC Toolbox

Child-Serving Organizations

Community Emergency Planners

Individuals and Families

Policymakers

## COVID-19 RESOURCES

To assist in locating COVID-19 related tools in the RCRC Toolbox, we have assembled a brief selection of relevant items. Download the guide in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).

### About the Toolbox

In partnership with community leaders, the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative analyzed, recommended, and implemented procedures, training, and guidance to help build child-focused community resilience to disasters. The **RCRC Toolbox** is a dynamic collection of resources developed and curated throughout this initiative for the benefit of those working to make our communities and our children more resilient to disasters. This collection of tools and resources should be shared widely with communities nationwide.

### Using the Toolbox

The toolbox is organized by different kinds of people or organizations that are looking for tools to assist in their preparedness and planning efforts. For example, if you are a teacher or administrator of a school, daycare, etc., then the [Child-Serving Institutions](#) portal will have resources for planning, engaging parents, and managing crisis as an organization. The [Community Emergency Planners](#) portal is populated with tools for emergency managers, health departments, non-government organizations supporting disaster response, other similar entities, and anyone supporting emergency or disaster planning at the organizational level. The tools in this portal are focused on community-wide planning, exercises, continuity of operations, and other related guidance. If you are looking for your own personal preparedness, or for resources to directly provide to parents, the [Individuals and Families](#) portal will have some good checklists and other

# Conclusions

- Organizations and the community are a source for influencing actions and opinions on issues related to children and youth
- So, **if we work collectively and at multiple levels**, the confidence to meet the needs of children and youth in the event of future disasters increases as does our capacity and resilience to face it.

“As a nation, we have a moral obligation to protect the most vulnerable during a disaster, our children.”  
Mark Shriver, Save the Children



# Thank you very much !

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## Recuperación de las comunidades luego de un **DESASTRE**

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Jeff Schlegelmilch, el subdirector del Centro Nacional de Preparación para Desastres de Columbia University, y el director Resilient Children /Resilient Communities (RCRC), explicó el proceso de recuperación luego de un desastre, esta iniciativa está basada en un modelo de planificación para la resiliencia comunitaria enfocada en los niños y jóvenes. Los planes de manejo de emergencias recurrentemente fallan en incorporar las necesidades específicas de los niños y sus familias antes, durante y después de un desastre. Las instituciones de cuidado de menores, como las escuelas, normalmente quedan fuera de la ecuación, y pueden no tener los recursos o la capacidad para proveer refugio seguro y libre de trauma. Igualmente, pueden no tener alternativas para gestionar servicios de desplazamiento que incluya planes de reunificación familiar.

Estudios demuestran que las barreras que impiden que los niños vuelvan a una rutina normal de inmediato luego de una catástrofe pueden atrasar el retorno a la normalidad que los menores necesitan, y su impacto a largo plazo puede ser devastador. Volver rápidamente a su estilo de vida habitual, puede mejorar la recuperación de un niño y simultáneamente permitir a la familia trabajar otros asuntos.

Con el propósito de proteger a los ciudadanos más vulnerables de una comunidad ante una próxima emergencia o desastre, el National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University's Earth Institute, con el apoyo del Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud y el Puerto Rico Children & Youth Task Force, llevaron a cabo el Taller de Planificación en Preparación el pasado martes, 15 de octubre, desde las 9:30 de la mañana hasta las 3:00 de la tarde, en la Oficina del Departamento de la Familia en Mayagüez. Este tiempo estuvo dirigido a la preparación de la niñez y

la juventud, como parte de la iniciativa Resilient Children/Resilient Communities. Los participantes identificaron áreas para desarrollar planes de preparación institucionales y comunitarios e iniciaron alianzas a través de los varios sectores que contribuyen al bienestar de la niñez y juventud en la comunidad.

"El taller es uno de los primeros pasos donde se convoca a diferentes entidades privadas, públicas y organizaciones sin fines de lucro, para establecer en conjunto a los distintos organismos convocados un plan de preparación y recuperación. Esto se hace conforme a las prioridades señaladas, tales como: tener espacios seguros para permitir que los menores vuelvan a su rutina, mejorar la comunicación entre agencias, hacer a los niños parte del proceso de preparación y fortalecer los servicios de salud mental", argumentó Yesenia Delgado Castillo, representante del Instituto del Desarrollo de la Juventud.

Antonia Fernández Samur coordinadora del programa Resilient Children /Resilient Communities, enfatizó, en que "durante la fase piloto llevado a cabo en el 2015 hasta el 2018 en colaboración con Save the Children, se desarrolló un método



de resiliencia comunitaria inclinada a los niños, que incluye el fortalecimiento de la planificación para desastres, educación, y la construcción de conocimiento. Esto se logró fomentado dos programas pilotos enfocados en el establecimiento de coaliciones para la resiliencia comunitaria en el Condado de Washington, AR y en el Condado de Putnam, NY. Junto a líderes de estos sectores la iniciativa analizó, recomendó e implementó procedimientos, entrenamientos y guías, para ayudar a las comunidades a proteger a los niños en desastres".

Fernández Samur continuó diciendo, "la segunda etapa de la iniciativa expande el modelo a nuevas comunidades que están recuperándose recientemente de alguna catástrofe o desastre para apoyarlas, identificando las necesidades y áreas de mejora. El modelo

y las medidas originales están siendo aplicadas en comunidades afectadas por el huracán María en distintas localidades de Puerto Rico". La principal medida de éxito en este proyecto es la implementación del índice de preparación comunitaria. Es un instrumento de preparación a nivel de comunidad que está basado en evidencia y que fue desarrollado por Save the Children junto a National Center for Disaster Preparedness. En este proceso también se ubicaron personas influyentes, para lograr promover cambios en el sistema.

"Resilient Children /Resilient Communities (RCRC), está financiada por la compañía global, integra las lecciones aprendidas de la investigación en la recuperación post-desastre para construir resiliencia en las familias", señaló Antonia Fernández Samur.



ANTONIA FERNÁNDEZ SAMUR,  
COORDINADORA DEL PROYECTO Y  
YESENIA DELGADO CASTILLO