

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Partnership to Help Communities Protect and Care for Children Impacted by Disasters

GSK, the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University (NCDP) and Save the Children announce the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative

NEW YORK (June 11, 2015) – GSK, NCDP and Save the Children today announced a partnership to protect the millions of children that are at risk of natural or man-made disasters.

Every day, 69 million children spend the day at daycare or school. If disaster strikes during that time, 21 states and the District of Columbia lack basic preparedness standards to protect them in schools and child care centers and 40% of American parents do not have an emergency plan. It took an astounding seven months to reunify the last child after Hurricane Katrina.

Every part of the United States is susceptible to natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, wildfires and floods and with the onset of hurricane season comes the question...how can we better protect children and families?

The *Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative* – funded through a \$2 million, three-year grant from GSK – will analyze and recommend procedures, trainings and guidance to help localities shield children from post-disaster devastation.

Emergency response plans often fail to address the specific needs of children and their families before, during and after disasters. Children's institutions such as daycare centers and schools are left out of the equation, and communities may not have the resources and capacity to provide safe, non-traumatic sheltering and displacement services. Studies show that slow recovery can delay the return to normalcy that kids need, and the long-term impact can be devastating.

Over a three-year period, the *Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative* will develop two pilot programs – one in Washington County, Arkansas and one in Putnam County, New York. The partnership will guide participating communities through a crisis simulation, and help them develop a sustainable, child-focused action plan. Impact will be measured using the Community Preparedness Index (CPI), an evidence-based measure of community preparedness previously developed by Save the Children in collaboration with NCDP.

“Severe gaps in emergency planning, particularly the lack of the inclusion of children’s critical needs for protection, safeguarding and support, put communities and families across the United States at risk,” says Dr. Irwin Redlener, director of the National Center for Disaster Preparedness. “As severe weather and other disasters wreak havoc on local communities, we hope that community leaders will benefit from guidance on how to incorporate the unique needs of children into their preparation and response plans.”

The initiative will form a National Children Resilience Board (NCRB) that will identify national policies and programs to serve as vehicles for improving preparedness for children nationally. The initiative will also launch a national outreach campaign to educate localities nationwide on how to better care for children following disasters.

“This unique initiative will identify and replicate best practices in preparing organizations that serve children at the community level” says Jeff Schlegelmilch, the Project Director and the Managing Director for Strategic Planning and Operations at the National Center for Disaster Preparedness. “This initiative’s approach of integrating private sector resources with the expertise of academia and non-profits to support sustainable community preparedness is a game-changer in the way we prepare for disasters nationally.”

“GSK is committed to supporting the health of communities where we work and live. It is vital that business, academia and non profits work together to protect those who can’t protect themselves, children. We are proud to be a partner in the *Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative*, and a part of the solution to ensure our communities and families are prepared to face critical emergencies and disasters.” said Jack Bailey, president, US Pharmaceuticals, GSK.

“When disaster strikes, children are always the most vulnerable,” said Jeanne-Aimee De Marrais, Save the Children’s senior director for U.S. emergencies. “Children have unique needs around their physical safety, but also around their emotional wellbeing and their long-term development, all of which can be severely impacted by disaster. It’s critical that communities do everything they can to protect their youngest residents, well before the worst happens. This project is all about empowering communities to better understand what kind of actions they can now take to protect children from future harm.”

This initiative builds on past work and collaboration between NCDP and Save the Children, both collectively and independently, to assist vulnerable populations in the wake of disasters. It is also part of GSK’s global five-year partnership with Save the Children to help save the lives of 1 million children worldwide.

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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.

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 or follow us on twitter.com/GSKUS.

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. Learn more about our Get Ready Get Safe preparedness initiative at www.SavetheChildren.org/GetReady.



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