

New Online Toolbox Equips Parents, Communities with Tools to Keep Children Safe in Disaster

NEW YORK (June 18, 2018) – If disaster strikes while you’re at work, where will your children be taken? Are their daycare centers and camps prepared for such an event? Are those facilities on the radar of your community’s first-responders? How can you ensure your children are protected?

One year after a devastating hurricane season reminded Americans about the importance of disaster preparedness and with the 2018 hurricane season already underway, a team of top emergency specialists and researchers have released a cutting-edge set of online tools to help families and communities keep children safe in disasters.

With nearly two-thirds of American households lacking adequate disaster plans, the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities (RCRC) Toolbox provides the resources that parents, community leaders, emergency management officials, schools and child care centers need to prepare for emergencies and improve their abilities to help children quickly return to a sense of normalcy. The toolbox is available online to the public free of charge.

The RCRC Toolbox is the culmination of a \$2 million, three-year Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative led by The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University’s Earth Institute and the international nonprofit Save the Children. The project is funded by the global healthcare company GSK.

The goal of the RCRC Toolbox is to foster a community-wide approach to child-focused disaster planning and cultivate better communication between the various local organizations that serve children and families. It is the only comprehensive disaster planning resource that specifically focuses on the needs of children across sectors.

The daily lives of children depend on a variety of community members and organizations working together. This includes parents, schools, child care providers, public health professionals, municipal governments and first responders. Without proper planning, communication, and coordination among these groups, major disasters can severely disrupt this system of care for kids.

Examples of resources in the RCRC Toolbox include:

- Sample questions parents should ask their child care providers about emergency plans
- Tips for helping children cope after a traumatic event
- Guidelines for communities and caregivers to keep children safe in emergency shelters
- A handbook to help emergency personnel and child-serving organizations simulate disaster scenarios and test existing plans
- The best supplies to have on hand to make sure a child is prepared both at and away from home

Across the many issues facing children, parents are the most effective change agents in schools and communities. The RCRC Toolbox empowers parents and other caregivers to be catalysts for action around their whole community’s approach to preparedness. It also provides in-home tips for family disaster planning,

“These resources have been developed and curated by community-based partners with the support and assistance of national partners,” said the Project Director and NCDP Deputy Director Jeff Schlegelmilch, “This is the first approach of its kind to establish a community-driven, national approach to help our children and our communities be more resilient to disasters”

“Through our emergency response and recovery work, we’ve seen the gaps in protecting children during a disaster, and we know it’s going to take all of us to better protect our children when disaster strikes,” said Sarah Thompson, Director of Save the Children’s Emergency Programs. “This toolbox will help parents and community leaders prepare children and families in their community for emergencies.”

“We are proud to support the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities initiative as part of our commitment to improving the wellbeing of children. GSK has a long history of ensuring essential medicines, supplies and funds get to those in need after disaster strikes and this initiative aims to help communities prepare in advance to cushion the impact of disaster on our most vulnerable,” said Becki Lynch, Acting Director of Community Partnerships at GSK.

To access the RCRC Toolbox, go to <https://rcrctoolbox.org/>.

About the Resilient Children Resilient Communities Initiative

The Resilient Children Resilient Communities Initiative has worked for three years to design the RCRC Toolbox. As part of the project, NCDP and Save the Children chose two pilot communities to develop, test and fine-tune this new child-focused disaster planning model. The communities are Washington County, Arkansas and Putnam County, New York. In both locations, the project team established “Community Resilience Coalitions,” which brought emergency management officials together with child-serving institutions, schools, after school programs, social service providers, health care providers, parents, and dozens of other stakeholders to address gaps in the infrastructure that protects children in the event of a major disaster. The team organized local events to educate policymakers and the public about its work, and brought its findings to Washington, D.C., in an effort to influence national policy around disaster planning.

About the National Center for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University’s Earth Institute

[The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Earth Institute](http://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc) of Columbia University 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. Learn more about this initiative: <http://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc>

About Save the Children

Save the Children believes every child deserves a future. In the United States and around the world, we give children a healthy start in life, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We do whatever it takes for children – every day and in times of crisis – transforming their lives and the future we share. Learn more at <http://www.savethechildren.org/>.

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