

CHILDREN CONTINUE TO FACE CHALLENGES IN DISASTER RECOVERY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY (January 25, 2021) –

The Resilient Children/Resilient Communities (RCRC) Initiative, led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University's Earth Institute, has released a series of issue briefs to be used by legislators and decision-makers at all levels as informative briefs to better understand the issues faced by disaster affected communities as of 2021, with particular attention to the compounding impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The reports are available within the RCRC Toolbox, a curated collection of child-focused preparedness and resilience tools, and can be accessed here: <https://rcrctoolbox.org/rcrc-issue-briefs/>

Key recommendations address challenges in the following issue areas (links to content embedded):

- [Treating childcare as an essential service during disasters](#)
- [Expanding broadband access, especially in rural areas](#)
- [Increasing mental health resources for children affected by disasters](#)
- [Prioritizing stable housing programs and kid-friendly shelters](#)
- [Prolonging emergency food security programs in impoverished areas](#)

“These briefs demonstrate that while communities are working hard to meet the needs of children in disasters, there is still more that we can do nationally to support their efforts,” said Jeff Schlegelmilch, Director of NCDP and the National Director for the RCRC Initiative.

This report features commentary and case studies from the RCRC partner communities in North Carolina, Puerto Rico, Arkansas, and New York.

“The issues are identified and illustrated by the communities, while being supported by a data-driven national narrative,” said Jackie Ratner, a Senior Project Manager at NCDP, and the lead architect of the issue briefs. “Community voices are highlighted throughout each issue area. In this way, we can better understand how these nationally relevant issues manifest on a local level.”

National Center for Disaster Preparedness

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The COVID-19 pandemic, hurricanes, and other disasters remind us that our community resilience, including economic resilience, depends upon a quick return to normalcy for children and the programs that serve them, even if it's a different normal. Without first achieving normalcy for children, returning to life-as-usual remains a distant aspiration for caregivers and parents. Returning children's lives to routine after disaster opens the door for the greater community and economy to begin healing in full.

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About NCDP

[The National Center for Disaster Preparedness at the Earth Institute](#) 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:

About the RCRC Initiative

The Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative, now in its second phase, has collaboratively established six "Community Resilience Coalitions," in New York, Arkansas, North Carolina and Puerto Rico 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 initiative aims to build a model of child-focused community resilience and preparedness. The team also organized local events to educate policymakers and the public about its work, and brought its findings to Washington, D.C. in 2018, in an effort to raise awareness of child-focused disaster planning issues for national policy. The RCRC Initiative (<http://ncdp.columbia.edu/rcrc>) is funded by a grant from GSK. Visit the RCRC Toolbox (<https://rcrctoolbox.org>) to download and view a variety of curated and original disaster planning and resilience tools.

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