

State of Alaska  
Department of Health  
Division of Public Assistance

Child Care Program Office  
CCDF Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Plan

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Child Care Program Office  
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## **A. Overview**

The Child Care Program Office (CCPO) administers the following programs: Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), which provides help with child care expenses based on a sliding scale fee for eligible families; Child Care Licensing Program (CCL) which recruits, licenses, monitors and regulates child care facilities including Centers, Homes and Group Homes statewide; Child Care Grant Program, which provides monthly reimbursement funds to licensed facilities participating in the CCAP to promote quality child care, professional development, retention of early care and education professionals and safe and healthy environments for children in care; Alaska Inclusive Child Care Program (Alaska IN!) which increases the quality and availability of inclusive care for children with special needs who are participating in the CCAP; and Child Care Resource and Referral, which offers referral services to parents, consumer education and training to families, child care providers and the public regarding quality early care and education.

CCL is administered statewide from offices located in Juneau, Fairbanks, and Anchorage. The CCPO delegates authority to the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) who provides licensing services within the MOA via a grant. CCAP has three categories of assistance known as Parent's Achieving Self-Sufficiency (PASS) I, PASS II, and PASS III. PASS I Child Care Assistance is administered statewide through collaboration between the Division of Public Assistance and Work Services Provider grantees/contractors and/or DPA staff. PASS II and PASS III are administered statewide through grants to agencies who deliver CCAP services.

PASS I, PASS II, and PASS III CCA is administered statewide through grants/contracts and/or DPA staff. The CCPO grants to Alaska's statewide Child Care Resource and Referral Network, Thread. Thread's main office in Anchorage provides services to south central Alaska and they subcontract with an agency in Fairbanks to serve southeast, and northern and interior Alaska.

In the event of a disaster, the CCPO's goals are to continue to provide the following essential functions (core services) after first responders have provided critical services and power and communications have been restored to the disaster area:

- Authorize emergency child care;

- Pay child care providers for authorized child care; and
- Provide licensing related services.

Disaster response activities and reinstating CCAP and CCL would be evaluated; options (i.e. providing distance delivery or on-site services) considered and emergency regulations could be implemented to expedite processes associated with these essential functions. CCPO staff and grantees will continue to determine CCAP eligibility for new applicants and issue childcare authorizations and payments. The CCPO may waive certain CCAP eligibility criteria. CCL may implement emergency regulations (i.e. child care providers may have their current licenses extended if renewal is due during the disaster or follow-up time). CCPO staff may provide technical services via telephone, e-mail or fax to child care assistance applicants, child care providers, and grantees. In an emergency that requires on-site assistance, staff may be transported to that site.

Coordination with thread, CCAP and MOA grantees will ensure services to displaced children and families occur including family reunification.

DPA will continue to issue usual benefits for all programs to the extent possible and to areas of the state not impacted by the disaster. These issuances include Temporary Assistance, Work Services, and PASS I child care assistance requests.

## **B. Summary of Plan**

The Child Care Program Office (CCPO) has established this CCDF Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Plan to respond to a various range of potential emergencies and disasters. This plan serves as a guideline for the implementation of the CCPO essential roles and functions during an emergency or disaster, in conjunction with the division's plan. The plan is for a period to allow for restoration of normal operation for the agency. The plan serves as an additional supplement to the DPA COOP FY20. The DPA COOP is shared with the DOH Section of Emergency Program and the Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

The following areas have been identified as critical components based upon the DPA COOP and CCDF Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Plan:

1. Communication with internal and external stakeholders;
2. Reunification of children with parents;
3. Continuation of Child Care Licensing;
4. Receiving and processing of Child Care Assistance applications;
5. Continuation of authorization of benefits;
6. Issuing benefits and payments to families and/or providers; and
7. Educating child care providers about preparedness of a disaster and emergency.

In the event of an emergency or disaster, the role of the Child Care Program Office (CCPO) is to provide support to child care providers and to support all families in obtaining healthy and safe alternative child care during an emergency or disaster. The CCPO CCDF Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Plan includes emergency temporary licensing of child care facilities affected, coordination and relocation of children in affected child care facilities, and continuing the issuance and payment of benefits.

The following elements have been identified as critical to a successful disaster and emergency preparedness plan:

1. Child care services should be restored as soon as possible following an emergency for the wellbeing of families and as a critical component of the economy.
2. Child care providers have their own disaster and emergency preparedness plan as required by regulation detailing procedures for evacuation, relocation, shelter-in-place, lock down, communication and reunifications with families, continuity of operations, accommodations of infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and ensuring adequate supplies.

3. All families may need temporary assistance with child care while recovering from an emergency or disaster.

In the event of a disaster, the CCPO's goals are to continue to provide the following essential functions (core services) after first responders have provided critical services and power and communications have been restored to the disaster area:

- Authorize emergency child care;
- Pay child care providers for authorized child care; and
- Provide licensing related services.

The plan is not definitive and is dependent on geographical location and type of emergency or disaster, state agencies operating effectively, and resources available to the state, department, division, and/or agency.

### **C. Planning for Continuation of Services to Child Care Providers and Families**

The State of Alaska (SOA), Department of Health (DOH), Division of Public Assistance (DPA) has developed a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the division allowing response for a wide range of emergencies or disasters. The CCDF Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Plan addresses specifics for the Child Care Program Office (CCPO). The following is a list of priorities, in priority order:

#### **1. Communication**

The SOA CCPO will communicate with internal and external stakeholders in the event of an emergency or disaster. The CCPO will communicate the department and/or division priorities and establish procedures to carry out the SOA, DOH, DPA COOP and the CCDF Disaster and Emergency Preparedness Plan. The following are stakeholders, not in priority order:

##### **a. DOH**

- b. DPA
- c. CCPO employees
- d. State of Alaska's Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, *thread*
- e. Municipality of Anchorage (MOA)
- f. Tribal organizations
- g. Child Care Assistance Grantees
- h. Office of Children's Services

## 2. Reunification of Children with Parents or Guardian

The CCPO, in conjunction with grantees if needed, will coordinate reunification of children with parents or guardians. Child care providers are required by regulation to have the necessary knowledge, skills, ability, and supplies during an emergency or disaster. The CCPO and grantee(s) will make every effort, with the appropriate agencies and key partners, to reunify children with parents or guardians.

## 3. Continuation of Child Care Licensing and Services to Child Care Families

Having safe and healthy child care facilities is critical during an emergency or disaster. Per Alaska regulation, licensed facilities are required to have procedures for emergency policy and procedures. Licensing requires child care providers to have emergency and disaster plans identifying a relocation site. Licensing understands in the event of an emergency or disaster the relocation site could be inaccessible or hazardous to relocate to. The CCPO will make it a priority to issue emergency temporary child care licenses for facilities needing relocation due to the child care facility being inaccessible or hazardous to continue operation.

The CCPO will assist communities in identifying safe and healthy temporary child care facilities. If a community is in need of child care, licensing will work with emergency agencies to provide care at shelters or other locations. Licensing will ensure the emergency temporary child care facility meets basic health and safety requirements. Child care facilities that are closed due to an emergency or disaster will be identified and families will be referred to *thread* for alternate child

care referrals. *thread* will continue services of referrals to child care families during an emergency or disaster.

During an emergency child care licensing and *thread* will work to identify providers or programs that can care for additional children of the emergency responders.

#### 4. Continuation of Child Care Benefits

The SOA, DOH, DPA COOP establishes a hierarchy for essential functions and benefits. In the event of an emergency and/or disaster the department and/or division reserves the right to assign priority to specific benefits issuance.

The CCPO grantees will continue issuing benefits to families participating in the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) or replace lost benefits to recipients.

Once the CCPO has successfully established and implemented the priorities outlined above, the CCPO will begin receiving and processing applications, issuing benefits, and payments to providers as established as essential functions in the SOA, DOH, DPA COOP.

The type of response CCPO employs to address a disaster depends on the specific disaster's impact on communications and the automated IT systems that support CCPO programs such as: ICCIS, EIS, CMS, IRIS, Internet, telecommunications.

##### Scenario 1: Mainframe (EIS and IRIS) and Internet (ICCIS and CMS) available

This will likely not require a full disaster response. Staff will administer the CCAP and CCL essential functions from their present or alternate work sites as directed.

##### Scenario 2: Mainframe down (EIS and IRIS) but Internet available (ICCIS and CMS)

Staff will administer the CCAP and CCL essential functions except that the process for provider payment (verification interface that requires IRIS) cannot occur. PASS I authorizations will need to be requested manually.



### Scenario 3: Mainframe (EIS and IRIS) and Internet (ICCIS and CMS) down

This will require processing CCAP application and creating authorizations manually.

The process for provider payment (verification interface which requires IRIS) cannot occur. This may also require on-site CCL services.

### Scenario 4: Telecommunication Failure

This may not require a full disaster response. Staff will administer the CCAP and CCL essential functions from their present or alternate work sites as directed. Staff may be directed to use cellular emergency and wireless devices (laptops).

## **D. Technical Assistance to Child Care Providers**

In the event of an emergency or disaster child care licensing will account for each child care provider and the wellbeing of the children in care. The licensing specialist will contact, and once possible and safe, visit the affected child care facility(ies). During this process the State of Alaska Child Care Resource and Referral Agency *thread*, may assist with accounting for child care providers and the wellbeing of children in care. When a child care provider is contacted the following, but not limited to will be documented:

- If all program staff accounted for, the status of their wellbeing, and if there are any injuries or deaths.
- If all children accounted for, the status of their wellbeing, and if there are any injuries or deaths.
- If the child care facility needs resources and/or supplies from emergency responders.
- If communication occurred between provider and parent, and reunification of children and parents begun/been successful. Does the child care facility need assistance with reunification?
- If the program able to continue operation and meet the health and safety requirements of regulation, or has the child care facility had to move to a relocation site, and need an inspection?

## **E. Waiving of Eligibility and Participation Requirements**

In the event of a disaster or emergency the Federal or State Government must declare a state of emergency or disaster. All child care eligibility and participation requirements may be waived by the Child Care Program Office during a state of emergency or disaster for a period of time. By waiving eligibility and participation requirements, it allows for continuity of care for children and parents to complete necessary duties during an emergency and/or disaster.

## **F. Coordination with Emergency Management Agencies, Other State Agencies, and Stakeholders**

The State of Alaska (SOA), Department of Health (DOH), Division of Public Assistance (DPA) has developed a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for the division. The plan outlines mission-critical and essential functions to be implemented immediately following a disaster or emergency. The DPA COOP outlines whom an agency communicates with during a disaster or emergency.

In the event offices have sustained damage or a large number of providers and families are displaced, The CCPO will follow the disaster procedures as outlined in the Division of Public Assistance (DPA) Disaster Response Field Guide. Staff will await instructions from the Director's Office regarding DPA's response and their responsibility.

During a disaster an alternate site may be designated by the Commissioner or the Director. Alternate sites may also be chosen by other entities providing other services such as the Red Cross, FEMA, or Homeland Security. The decision will be made by the Commissioner or the Director and that information will be relayed to staff by the most direct method possible. Depending on the extent of damage to normal office communications, alternate sites may be announced via public announcements on the radio or television. Staff will report to the location nearest them.

As part of general disaster preparedness, each region will identify their Rapid Response Teams (RRT) which may include individuals from the CCPO. These teams will ensure the safety and comfort of families and providers. Community organizations and advocates may also be willing to assist in identifying families and providers in need, helping with basic emergency procedures and providing assistance at public assistance disaster relief sites. Possible partners in post disaster recover services may include, but are not limited to: State of Alaska Child Care Resource and Referral Agency *thread*, Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), and Child Care Assistance grantees.

The SOA Emergency Operation Plan (EOP) addresses an array of disasters and emergencies. This plan specifies how the State will organize and respond to disasters and emergencies. The SOA EOP identifies the agency's response for child care and the safety and wellbeing of children.

The CCPO will communicate with the State of Alaska Child Care Resource and Referral Agency *thread*, Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), and Child Care Assistance grantees during an emergency or disaster. The CCPO will meet with stakeholders and the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC) to coordinate and communicate emergency and disaster preparedness planning.

## **G. Rebuilding Child Care After an Emergency or Disaster**

The Child Care Program Office (CCPO) will be involved in rebuilding and establishing the State of Alaska's child care system. The rebuilding efforts will focus on two components:

1. Retention and rebuilding of the child care provider network.
2. Rebuilding the child care assistance program.

The CCDF Disaster and Emergency Response Plan identifies the needs of families, child care providers, and child care services in the event of an emergency or disaster.

When the child care assistance program is impacted by an emergency or disaster, the CCPO will follow the rebuilding process as identified by the Department of Health (DOH), Division of Public Assistance (DPA), Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP).