

# Save the Children

## Resilient and Ready Communities Initiative

*Concept Note*



### Executive Summary

For over 75 years, Save the Children has been helping children survive and thrive by improving their health, education and economic opportunities and, in times of acute crisis, mobilizing rapid lifesaving assistance to help children recover from the effects of conflict and natural disasters. In the United States, our work focuses on early childhood education, literacy and physical activity and nutrition programs in underserved, rural communities, as well as emergency preparedness, response and recovery.

In the nearly five years since Hurricane Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast of the United States, Save the Children has emerged as the national leader in ensuring children's well-being during domestic emergencies. This year, we are launching a new initiative aimed at helping high-risk communities prepare to safeguard children in the event of a natural disaster or other emergency. The *Resilient and Ready Communities* initiative is based on a highly successful one-year pilot project in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Through this initiative, Save the Children is working with emergency planners, emergency responders, schools, childcare leaders, caregivers and children to build on communities' strengths and address critical gaps in emergency planning for children's comprehensive needs. Beginning in early 2010, the pilot program is being replicated in the following six regions:

- **California:** San Diego and Los Angeles Counties
- **District of Columbia:** Greater Washington DC Metropolitan Area
- **Mississippi:** Jackson, Harrison, Hancock, Stone, Pearl River and George Counties
- **New York:** Greater New York City Metropolitan Area
- **Louisiana:** New Orleans, Baton Rouge, Shreveport, and Alexandria
- **Texas:** Bexar, Travis, Dallas and Harris counties (San Antonio, Austin, Dallas, and Houston respectively)

### The Initiative

The *Resilient and Ready Communities* initiative helps communities in at-risk regions meet new national standards and integrate best practices for supporting children's safety and well-being through preparedness planning and programs. Building on current resources in the communities, Save the Children uses its expertise to: develop and/or supplement emergency preparedness plans that address communities' needs as well as local, state and federal standards; deliver training to emergency managers, shelter managers and the childcare community; and implement disaster risk reduction programs directly with children to create *Resilient and Ready Communities*.

In 2007 and 2008, Save the Children developed a highly successful prototype preparedness framework that we are now replicating nationally in a number of states. The goal of the program is to make children a priority in every stage of emergency planning, mitigation, response and recovery.

The pilot program linked together more than 60 partners, including childcare centers, schools, neighbors, emergency managers, business and social-service partners, hundreds of children and their caregivers and others. The group developed a framework and best practices to support children before, during and after disasters – a framework that is being adopted to protect the well-being of children across the nation should a disaster strike.

Best practices derived from the pilot program include:

- **Addressing children’s unique needs in community Emergency Operations Plans:** Our Emergency Planning and Technical Guidance supports emergency planners in developing comprehensive plans for children ages 0-18, and supports communities in meeting new national, state and local standards of care for children. Issues addressed include: hazard-mitigation; continuity of care; evacuation; transportation; reunification; guidance on immediate needs; resources to support safety, nutrition and hygiene; education and emotional support; and planning for long-term recovery.
- **Educating emergency preparedness/response officials on the unique needs of children:** We provide briefings on new and developing policies regarding children in disasters, best practices supporting child safety and well-being and programs that best support children before, during and after emergencies.
- **Establishing and coordinating an emergency planning council focused on addressing the needs of children in emergencies:** We bring together organizations – including government, nonprofits and child-focused agencies – to identify gaps in planning for children, to identify community assets and resources and to ensure children are represented in emergency preparedness exercises.
- **Developing community capacity to provide Temporary Respite Care (a new national standard) to children in shelters, assistance centers and other temporary emergency sites:** Save the Children provides training in our signature Child-Friendly Spaces Program, also known as Temporary Respite Care, to background-checked, appropriate caregivers tasked with supporting children in times of emergencies.
- **Developing and implementing sustainable Disaster Risk Reduction Programs for children and caregivers:** Save the Children’s programs are specifically tailored to the assessed needs of each community in which we work. Programs may include:
  - ***The Resilient & Ready Program:*** an hour long workshop designed to educate children (grades K-6) and build resiliency when faced with various forms of disasters, including earthquakes, hurricanes, floods and wildfires. The workshop combines cooperative games with disaster education to provide a fun, educational way for children to learn about preparedness.
  - ***Preparedness and continuity planning for childcare providers:*** designed to help childcare providers and their children survive disasters, large or small, with safe, secure and continuous care. Save the Children supports communities to enhance preparedness planning and training for childcare providers in both licensed centers and home facilities. In collaboration with local Resource and Referral Agencies, Save the Children builds on curriculums, such as the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies’ (NACCRRRA) “Is Childcare

Ready?” and “Open for Business,” to deliver comprehensive training and assessments to enhance disaster readiness, continuity planning and overall support planning for providers.

Based on this framework of best practices, Save the Children has developed a targeted, community-based approach to help towns, cities, counties and states address the unique needs of children in disasters. We believe that all disasters are local, and therefore we must take into account the individual needs and capacity of each community in order to improve children’s well-being and safety before, during and after disasters. Through this initiative, Save the Children will work in collaboration with partners such as Offices of Emergency Services, Childcare Resource and Referral Networks, the American Red Cross and Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters (VOADs) to amplify community strengths and assets, leveraging our national partnerships to support community planning and training.

Your support, coupled with the support of locally engaged businesses and organizations, will help us replicate this program’s success and make California, the District of Columbia, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York and Texas national leaders in disaster resilience and preparedness for children and families.