

Our Florida Team Using Your Support to Reach Children and Families Recovering from Hurricane Irma

December 2017

Summary

Hurricane Irma was the second of three major hurricanes to impact the United States in 2017. It crashed ashore in the Florida Keys on September 10 and then stormed northward, leaving a trail of damage and flooding. While children, families and communities state-wide were affected, those in low-income and migrant communities in southwest Florida were dealt especially harsh blows.

We deployed over 30 staff and volunteers, who have worked tirelessly to help meet immediate needs and initiate recovery programs. To date, over 17,500 children and adults have benefitted from work you've helped make possible. We are pleased to share this progress report with you, with our gratitude for your generous and heartfelt contribution.

Irma's Ongoing Impact on Children

It's been three months since Hurricane Irma, but the impact of the first major hurricane to strike Florida in over a decade continues to be felt by children, families and communities. Access to safe, affordable child care is a challenge for working parents who depend on this service, as many providers have not reopened. Our staff are also seeing post-traumatic stress and emotional exhaustion among families resulting from three months of nonstop recovery. And, with the start of the next hurricane season in seven months, child-serving organizations need help to ensure that preparedness plans are in place and understood by staff and children.

Your Support at Work

Save the Children, the national leader in child-focused emergency relief and response in the U.S., quickly deployed staff and volunteers to Florida to mobilize relief for children and their families. Your support, pooled with other resources, allowed us to address their urgent needs.

When our staff reached southwest Florida and the Keys, they recognized that Hurricane Irma was especially devastating to impoverished and migrant families,



Sarah Thompson, our U.S. director of preparedness, colors with Keymoni*, age 2, at a shelter in Jacksonville. We provided cribs, infant hygiene supplies and children's activity books to families at the shelter.

Photo: Sarah Newmann/Save the Children
* name changed to protect privacy

many of whom depend on seasonal agriculture for income. These families have the fewest resources and will have the most difficult road to recovery. That's why we focused on providing the support that they and their children require, and why we created strong partnerships with the local groups that serve these communities.

Here are highlights of our work to date:

Meeting Immediate Needs

- 8,800 children benefited from our distributions of diapers and infant care and hygiene supplies, and 2,057 children received blankets we provided to their families. Our teams conducted distributions in partnership with local agencies including the Meals of Hope food pantry and the Early Learning Coalition of Key West. Other distributions of hygiene kits, children's sleeping bags and water took place through the Immokalee Child Care Center, the Guadalupe Center and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association. We also provided clothing and other items to a shelter for abused women and children in Naples.
- We partnered with Wesley House Family Services, a leading child protection agency in the Keys, to provide low-income families with \$6,000 in food vouchers so that they could focus on their recovery, knowing that their children would not go hungry.
- We arranged for AmeriCorps volunteers to help our partners with distributions and to help families muck out debris and prepare for rebuilding, benefiting an estimated 2,500 people. The volunteers also packed thousands of meals for our partner Meals of Hope in Naples, who report that the meal kits have fed approximately 250,000 individuals

Ensuring Children's Psychosocial Well-being

- We opened our disaster-tested child-friendly spaces program at the largest shelter in South Florida, the Miami Fair Expo Center. These spaces provide structured activities and a sense of routine to help protect children from psychosocial distress during and immediately after an emergency. Activities in safe, designated spaces are led by trained adult facilitators and build on children's natural and evolving coping capacities. Over 200 children whose families were in the shelter benefited.
- We and our partners began to schedule the first of dozens of resiliency-building workshops for children using our signature psychosocial program, Journey of Hope. The program's age-specific workshops for children, teens and adults help them cope with their losses, fears and stresses and build resilience to future crises. Workshops will be held in several counties in South Florida, and in Duval County, which includes the city of Jacksonville.
- Children's well-being also depends in large part on the well-being of their caregivers. Helping child caregivers to process their experiences after Hurricane Irma and develop coping skills is the first step in increasing their capacity to support children. So far, we've used our Journey of Hope Care for the Caregiver curriculum to support 87 children's caregivers.

Returning Children to Learning

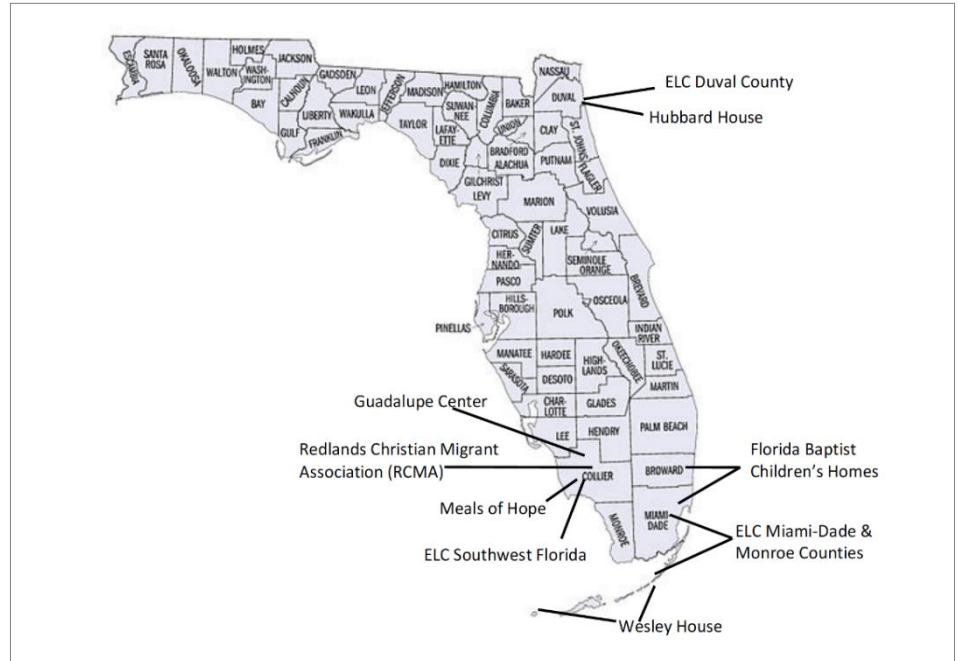
- Child care centers in Duval County that serve an estimated 600 children and the shelter for abused women and children in Naples received our child-friendly spaces kits to help create opportunities for children to play, learn and take a time-out from their stress. A \$75,000 grant to the Early Learning Coalition of Duval County is enabling them to support the repair of up to 23 child care centers that were badly damaged by Irma.

Three-month Progress Report



- Several child care providers in the Keys resumed service with our support through a grant we made to the Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. We delivered materials and funded repair work needed to restore children's access to play and learning activities, allowing parents to return to work. We have supported eight child care providers who serve 1,588 children, with support for at least 30 others under way.
- We provided 10,300 children's books to the Guadalupe Center, the Immokalee Child Care Center and other agencies in southwest Florida for distribution to families with young children.
- We mobilized AmeriCorps volunteers to help repair classrooms so that two daycare centers in Marathon Key could reopen and provide daily early learning activities to 148 children.

Our Program Areas and Partnerships (as of November 16, 2017)



Strengthening Local Capacity

- We expanded our reach by supporting trusted local groups whose programs are an invaluable community resource. We have awarded over \$1.2 million in grants to 9 groups whose services were affected by Hurricane Irma or to coalitions of child care providers. The grants include one to the Redlands Christian Migrant Association to help it reach families in five migrant and deeply impoverished communities. The Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, another of our grant recipients, has used funds to replace food and educational supplies at 32 childcare centers in the Keys. Other grants are supporting child protection services and foster care.

Looking Ahead: The Next Three Months

Save the Children has committed to remaining in damaged Florida communities and by the side of children and families for the next two years. Your pooled support will help to underpin this recovery work. Over the next three months, our staff will continue to work closely with local agencies to meet families' immediate needs, restore early education and child care services and provide psychosocial and mental health support to children and adult caregivers, including to teachers and child care workers.

We will be:

- Expanding our Journey of Hope and other psychosocial programs to schools and other child-serving groups. We and our partners will recruit teachers, social workers, counsellors and child care

workers to be trained as trainers in the Journey of Hope modules. These trainers will then train others to become facilitators, who will implement workshops for children in schools, after school programs, and at child care centers.

- Ensuring that child care providers in the most impoverished communities have the resources they need to make their centers safe and healthy.
- Organizing Psychological First Aid training for child care providers so that they can address the stress children and their families are under.
- Exploring the launch of emergency preparedness initiatives such as our Get Ready Get Safe program.
- Monitoring the work of groups that received our grants to ensure that they are using these funds to reach children and families.

One Story of Recovery

Dolphin Montessori South in Key Largo was among the many child care centers in the Florida Keys that sustained significant damage from Hurricane Irma's storm surge and high winds. With the center closed, children who were enrolled lost out on important development activities and the structure of a daily routine. Working parents had to find alternative child care arrangements or miss work. A grant from Save the Children was key in helping the owners, the Barrios family, to completely renovate the center and replace ruined furnishings including cribs, toys and book shelves. Our grant enabled the facility to reopen and to provide some 30 children and their families with access to this essential service. Jorge Barrios, at right, and his son Jorge spent weeks ripping out and replacing waterlogged walls and floors and making other repairs.

