

Children in Disasters: The Smallest Voices





*Children
are not
small adults*

Children are Different: Physical

- ✱ Every breath they take
 - ✱ Environmental changes
 - ✱ Increased exposure to dangerous chemicals
 - ✱ Increased vulnerability to respiratory infections

Children are Different: Physical

- ✱ The ins and outs of circulation
 - ✱ Lack of appropriate oral fluids may lead to dehydration and shock and chemical imbalances
 - ✱ Vomiting and diarrhea may lead to rapid deterioration and shock
 - ✱ Low blood volume means earlier shock when bleeding occurs

Children are Different: Physical

- ✱ It's all in their heads
 - ✱ A child's head is a large, heavy target
 - ✱ Head injury is the leading cause of traumatic morbidity and mortality
 - ✱ Chemical and biologic agents are more likely to affect a child's brain and to do so quickly

Children are Different: Cognitive/Behavioral

- ✱ Can't plan for themselves
- ✱ May not understand abstract concepts
- ✱ May not recognize danger
- ✱ May not know how to escape
- ✱ May hide from rescuers

Children are Different: Psychological

- ✱ Children of different ages react differently to trauma
- ✱ Very sensitive to the emotions around them
- ✱ Require safety and security for emotional health
- ✱ Somatic symptoms are deceptive
- ✱ Susceptible to posttraumatic stress disorder

Children are Different: Special Needs

- ✱ 15-20% of children have chronic medical problems
- ✱ Require additional planning and advance decision-making
- ✱ Have additional physical vulnerabilities
- ✱ Resources for normal emergency care are inadequate

**Initial medical
care in disasters
will never be
better than it is
every day**



Children are Different: Deficiencies in Emergency Care

- ✱ 90% of kids are treated at hospitals with limited pediatric capabilities
- ✱ Only 6% of Emergency Departments have all the equipment needed to care for critically ill kids
- ✱ Only 50% of all hospitals have 85% of the equipment needed
- ✱ There are no universal standards for staff training in pediatrics

Children are Different: Deficiencies in Emergency Care

- ✱ Pediatric training for EMS providers has improved but is still minimal
- ✱ Specialized equipment, training, protocols and medical oversight are inconsistently available and used
- ✱ Many children do not have access to specialized medical systems and resources, including mental health

Children are Different: Deficiencies in Disaster Planning

- ✱ Children are prime targets for terrorism
- ✱ Specific training, protocols, drugs and other treatments for agents of terrorism are lacking
- ✱ Diligence in realistic child/family disaster planning is largely not mandated and standards not defined

Children are Different: Deficiencies in Disaster Planning

- ✱ Medical surge capacity for pediatric patients is ill-defined and inadequate
- ✱ Child-specific disaster planning must be in place wherever children spend their time
- ✱ Families must be empowered to plan and prepare

Priorities



Priorities for Meeting the Needs of Children in Disasters

- ✱ Assure the needs of children are met well *every day*
- ✱ Development and support of *systems* of pediatric care
- ✱ Make quality emergency pediatric care accessible to all families
- ✱ EMS for Children program



Priorities for Meeting the Needs of Children in Disasters

- ✱ Integrate children and families in all disaster planning and preparedness efforts
 - ✱ Define, mandate and support appropriate pediatric/family preparedness initiatives
 - ✱ Prioritize and support research initiatives to guide planning and response



Priorities for Meeting the Needs of Children in Disasters

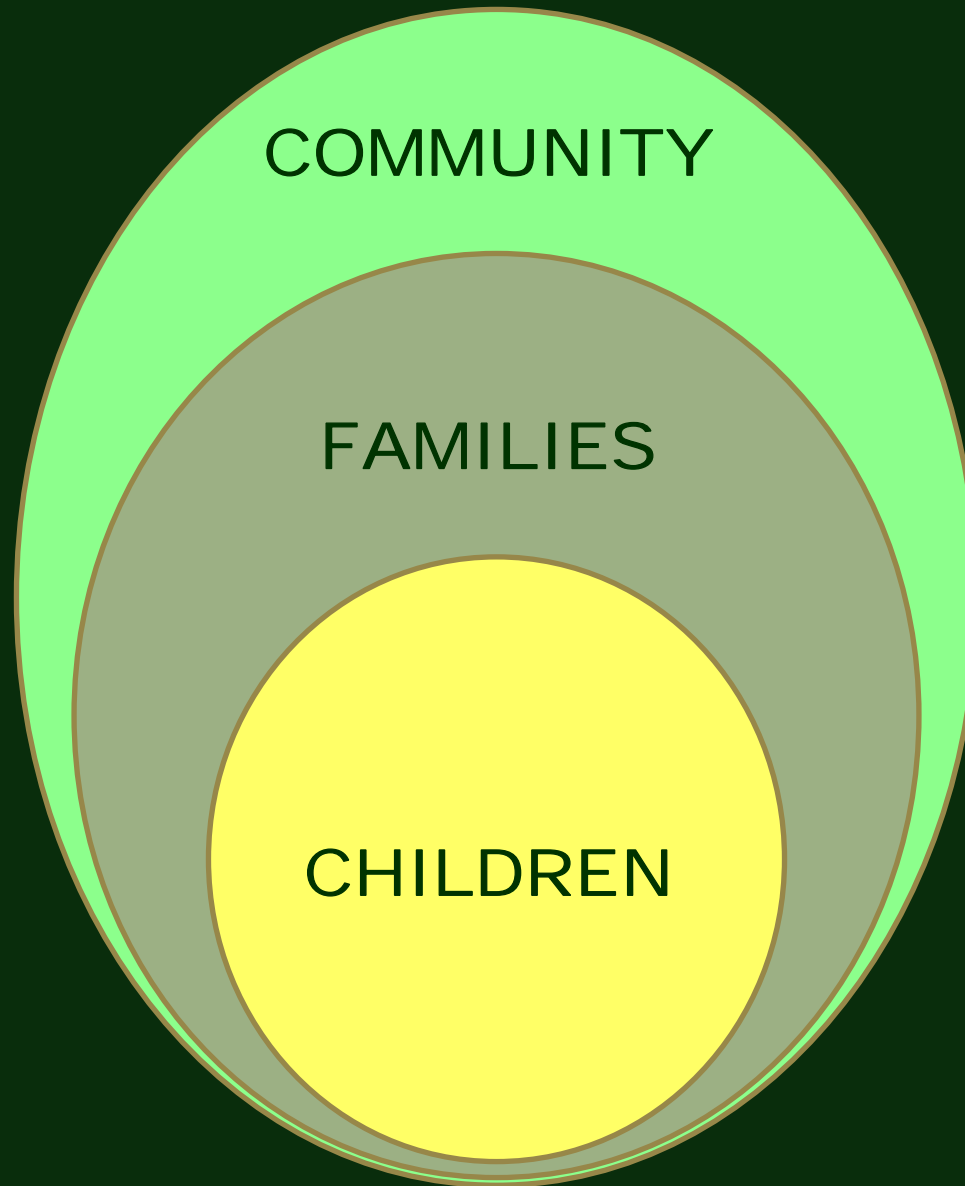
- ✱ Empower families
 - ✱ Develop and support initiatives that emphasize family disaster planning and self-sufficiency
 - ✱ Recognize and support the roles of primary medical care providers in family planning
 - ✱ Make preparedness financially feasible
 - ✱ Keep families together



American Academy of Pediatrics

- ✱ Disaster Preparedness Advisory Council
- ✱ AAP Partnership for Children's Disaster Preparedness
- ✱ CHILDisaster Network
- ✱ www.aap.org/terrorism
- ✱ Representation on numerous national-level committees
- ✱ Supports federal EMS for Children program
- ✱ Members with experience

Safe Harbor





Thank you!

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