

Hurricane Matthew Flooding Leaves Future of Safe, Affordable Child Care in Limbo for Many in Carolinas, Save the Children Says

"Consistent, dangerous gap" for children after U.S disasters

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Save the Children →

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FAIRFIELD, Conn., Oct. 19, 2016 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Scores of flooded child care centers in North and South Carolina cannot tap official disaster recovery support, putting children's safety and wellbeing at risk while families struggle to rebuild, Save the Children said.

"The fact that most child care doesn't qualify as an 'essential service' in U.S. disaster recovery creates a consistent, dangerous gap for America's most vulnerable disaster-affected children," said Bill Corwin, Save the Children's vice president of U.S. Programs. "We're very concerned about how this gap will play out for children and families in the Carolinas after Hurricane Matthew."



A playground underwater in Lumberton, NC on Oct. 14 after severe flooding from Hurricane Matthew. Save the Children is working to help child care centers in North and South Carolina recover and reopen so distressed children can get back into safe, supportive care as soon as possible. Credit: Holly Spicer/Save the Children

While government funding helps schools and Head Start centers rebuild and reopen to children quickly after disasters, no such support is available to for-profit child care centers, which account for the majority of child care centers in America. With the exception of large chains, for-profit

centers typically run on tight margins, are often underinsured and unable to qualify for small business loans due to poor credit or lack of collateral. Even when independently-run centers are properly insured, the claims process can take many months, leaving them unable to reopen quickly to serve children in disaster-affected communities.

As it has after many other recent U.S. disasters, Save the Children is working to close the child care recovery gap in North and South Carolina by identifying damaged child care centers that serve the most marginalized families, and helping them recover and reopen.

"The stress and chaos that follows a disaster like these floods puts enormous emotional strains on young children, and, if not alleviated, puts their continued development at risk," Corwin said. "The need for safe, nurturing care and a daily routine has never been greater for many children in the Carolinas right now. At the same time, families need to rebuild and get back to work to support their families. They need safe, dependable child care to do that."

Challenges to post-disaster child care recovery has strained families in many recent U.S. disasters, including the Louisiana flooding this summer that forced 86 child care centers serving 6,000 children to close, according to Child Care Aware of America. Save the Children has raised funds to help 22 of those Baton-Rouge-area centers replace lost learning materials, equipment and furniture that are essential to safe, quality care. After Hurricane Sandy, 697 child care providers had to close for one to eight months, according to Child Care Aware. With the generous support of donors, Save the Children helped more than 100 New York and New Jersey child care centers reopen.

In its Hurricane Matthew response in the Carolinas, Save the Children is targeting hard-hit communities with high poverty rates, including in Robeson County, North Carolina and Dillon and Florence counties in South Carolina. The organization is raising funds to support the reopening of at least 30 child care centers.

Save the Children also responded to last year's floods in South Carolina, where it also serves nearly 5,000 children through its long-term early education and literacy programs.

To support Save the Children's response to Hurricane Matthew – both domestically and in Haiti – please visit: www.savethechildren.org/Matthew.

Save the Children gives children in the United States and around the world a healthy start, the opportunity to learn and protection from harm. We invest in childhood – every day, in times of crisis and for our future. Follow us on Twitter and Facebook.

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