

NATIONAL STRATEGY

for

YOUTH PREPAREDNESS EDUCATION

EMPOWERING, EDUCATING AND BUILDING RESILIENCE



FEMA



American Red Cross

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FOREWORD

Disasters impact all segments of the population, but they do not affect everyone equally. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) indicates, “Children typically represent 50-60 percent of those affected by disaster.”ⁱ The sheer number of children affected by disasters is likely to increase in the years ahead due to changes within both society and the environment that may increase the frequency and severity of disasters.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA’s) Strategic Foresight Initiative calls for a whole community approach to building resilience, including “infus[ing] emergency management principles and life skills across the entire educational experience...with community–tailored curricula shaped by the local environment.”ⁱⁱ Furthermore, Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8)¹ emphasizes the need for involvement from all sectors of society in preparing for and responding to threats and hazards.

FEMA, the U.S. Department of Education (Department of Education) and the American Red Cross (Red Cross) have developed a strategy for mobilizing communities across the country in youth preparedness education. The *National Strategy for Youth Preparedness Education: Empowering, Educating and Building Resilience* is a call to our Nation to educate youth about actions that they and their families can take to protect their safety and well-being and that of their communities when disasters threaten or strike. With such education, our Nation’s youth can help prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters. Furthermore, the prepared youth of today can become the resourceful adults of the future.

“Our national preparedness is the shared responsibility of all levels of government, the private and nonprofit sectors, and individual citizens. Everyone can contribute to safeguarding the Nation from harm.”

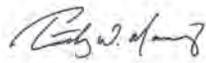
–from Presidential Policy Directive 8 (PPD-8): National Preparedness

¹ Available at: <http://www.dhs.gov/presidential-policy-directive-8-national-preparedness>

Development of the National Strategy was based on thorough review of current theory and practice about youth preparedness education programs and input and insights from a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including young people. [Bringing Youth Preparedness Education to the Forefront: A Literature Review and Recommendations](#)² summarizes the findings from the literature review. Stakeholder input was obtained during the 2010 National Summit on Youth Preparedness and from a series of regional and state youth preparedness workshops that took place during 2011 and 2012.

The challenge we all share is to engage and empower youth and their families in becoming current and future generations of prepared citizens, and this National Strategy is the critical next step in facing that challenge. Implementing a nationwide movement focused on youth preparedness will require the dedication and committed efforts of an array of key partners. It is critical that national and community-based organizations share in the commitment to support and implement this National Strategy.

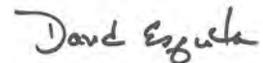
Please join us in working to prepare our Nation's children for the significant challenges that lie ahead.



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² Available under Resources at:
[http://www.ready.gov/
youth-preparedness](http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness)

WHY FOCUS ON YOUTH?

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ith approximately 74 million children under the age of 18 in the United States in 2011, children make up nearly one-quarter of the entire U.S. populationⁱⁱⁱ. Children³ are disproportionately impacted by disasters, yet insufficient attention has been given to preparing this population.

Children compose a special population known as a “vulnerable group.” Such groups are more prone than others to damage, loss, suffering, injury and death in the event of a disaster. Though numerous factors can influence how vulnerable a particular child will be when faced with a potential risk, research shows that children, in general, are susceptible to three types of vulnerability during a disaster: psychological, physical and educational.

- **Psychological vulnerability** is when a serious or traumatic event, such as a natural or manmade disaster, can greatly impact the mental health of children. Most studies focus on post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or similar conditions^{iv}. Between 30 and 50 percent of children in disaster conditions may be likely to develop PTSD symptoms that will persist for long periods of time.^{vi}
- **Physical vulnerability** refers to the actual physical harm a disaster can have on a person. In the United States, infants and young children (0-to 4-year-olds) may be most likely to die of exposure to extreme heat, compared to other ages of children and young adults; 5-to 14-year-olds are most likely to die in storms and flood events; and adolescents and young adults (15-to 24-year-olds) are most likely to die of excessive cold.^{vii}
- **Educational vulnerability** refers to how destruction caused by a disaster may negatively impact children’s academic performance, as it may cause children to miss school and delay their progress. For example, some children may be forced to change schools following a storm, with the average being three moves per child over a three-month period following a severe storm.^{viii}

³ For the purposes of this document, the terms “children” and “youth” are used interchangeably. The National Strategy focuses on youth of all ages, with the upper limit being the end of high school, rather than one specific age.

While children may face particular vulnerabilities during a disaster, they also have unique abilities to prepare themselves as well as their families, schools and communities. Two key documents highlight the benefits of youth preparedness and help envision a future in which youth are fully engaged in preparedness efforts: the [National Summit on Youth Preparedness: Summit Proceedings Report](#)⁴ and [Bringing Youth Preparedness to the Forefront: A Literature Review and Recommendations](#)⁵.

⁴Available at:
http://tdl.citizencorps.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/ready/212_Youth_Summit_Report_508.pdf

⁵Available under Resources at:
<http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness>

Identified below are three essential benefits that arise from youth preparedness efforts. Examples are provided of exemplary youth who have evidenced these benefits. It is important to keep in mind, however, that even small changes in youth behavior can have a big impact on community preparedness.



1. Empowered youth can help engage their families, their peers, and their communities in disaster readiness.

- **Children are positive influencers.** Children involved in youth preparedness programs can effectively help reach and spread important messages about preparedness to their family members. Participating in emergency preparedness activities—such as helping parents create a disaster supply kit, collecting items for the kit, making a family preparedness plan or creating a list of emergency numbers—not only empowers children but also educates adults about preparedness. Family preparedness activities are an essential part of all community preparedness efforts.

Tiffany Espensen, a member of FEMA’s 2012 Youth Preparedness Council, shares preparedness tips with her Twitter followers. Tiffany tweets about working with FEMA, building a kit, making a plan and preparing for disasters such as hurricanes and earthquakes. With nearly 15,000 Twitter followers, Tiffany encourages schools, Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) and others to share “TiffyTipTuesday” safety tips with their followers.

- **Children can become leaders.** By participating in youth preparedness programs, children are empowered to become leaders at home and in their schools and communities. Children who have participated in preparedness programs across the Nation have responded in emergencies and taught others about preparedness.

Diesel Embrey is a 17-year-old member of FEMA’s 2012 Youth Preparedness Council. He is certified at Virginia State Firefighter Levels 1 and 2 and as a Virginia Certified Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), and holds several other certifications, including those in CERT, Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)/First Aid, Hazardous Material (HAZMAT), Weapons of Mass Destruction Awareness, Emergency Animal Shelter Operator, and Incident Command Structure (ICS). Not only did Diesel respond to a massive 2,500-acre brush fire in Louisa County, Virginia in February 2011, he also responded to a magnitude 5.8 earthquake in Louisa County the following August, which damaged many homes and businesses. Diesel was in class at the high school at the time of the quake. He assumed a leadership role and helped to evacuate his fellow students and performed triage on the injured students. Diesel responded to the Mineral Firehouse and helped to establish an emergency evacuation shelter and triage center.

2. Youth are empowered through understanding of risks and knowing protective actions.

- Prepared children are more confident during an actual emergency. Studies and anecdotal evidence support the idea that children who have learned about emergency preparedness experience less anxiety during an actual emergency. The knowledge of what to do during an emergency empowers them to act with confidence and enables them to become active participants in emergency efforts.

Cadet Captain Jason Reed, a member of FEMA's 2012 Youth Preparedness Council, has served for several years as a search-and-rescue ground team member. His training prepared him to respond to several tornadoes that struck Henryville, Indiana. He worked alongside Emergency Management Agency departments, FEMA, and other state and federal agencies. He was involved in performing health and wellness checks in the community, helping provide a perimeter around damaged areas, and distributing water and supplies to those impacted by the storm.

3. Today's prepared children are tomorrow's prepared adults.

- Given proper training, children can develop strong skills that they carry into adulthood. Integrating disaster preparedness education into a child's life on a consistent, regular basis encourages children to view preparedness as a societal issue with lifelong value rather than as an ad hoc exercise. Reinforcement of disaster preparedness and mitigation, combined with active involvement in and practice of preparedness efforts, increases confidence, empowers youth, and enhances the likelihood that these behaviors and the associated sense of civic responsibility will be carried into adulthood.

VISION, PURPOSE AND GOALS OF THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

With this vulnerable group’s sensitivities and abilities in mind, FEMA, the Department of Education and the Red Cross have jointly developed the National Strategy for Youth Preparedness Education: Empowering, Educating and Building Resilience (National Strategy). This document is based on research and information from an array of sources and is intended to serve as a starting point for a youth-focused preparedness effort.

The vision of the National Strategy is to create a nation of prepared youth. Youth will be empowered to prepare for and respond to disasters; educated as to specific actions they can take before and after a disaster occurs; and prepared with knowledge and skills that will make them more resilient when faced with disasters. Instilling preparedness knowledge and skills in youth also will help develop a future population of prepared adults.

The purpose of the National Strategy is straightforward: to couple national attention on emergency and disaster preparedness with community action that focuses specifically on youth readiness for disasters and related events. The National Preparedness Goal identifies preparedness as including “five mission areas: Prevention, Protection, Mitigation, Response, and Recovery.”^{ix} The National Strategy’s envisioned alignment of attention to and action on youth preparedness can be realized with the support of organizations at the national, state and local levels that commit to engaging, empowering and building resilience in youth through preparedness education.

In support of this purpose, there are three goals for the National Strategy:

- Catalyzing efforts aimed at educating the youth of this Nation about preparing for and responding to future disasters;
- Establishing partnerships with stakeholders that place a high priority on youth preparedness; and
- Encouraging collaboration among groups at the federal, state and local levels, as well as national and local non-governmental organizations and private sector leaders, to implement and endorse this effort.

FEMA, the Department of Education, the Red Cross and their partners will work together to promote youth empowerment, facilitate acceptance of the concepts discussed in this document, develop disaster preparedness skills in youth, and generate momentum around this National Strategy. The goal is to have a variety of organizations affirm the National Strategy, such as school associations or school administrators, the Girl Scouts, the National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Civil Air Patrol, and any other organizations interested in furthering the cause of youth preparedness.

PARTNERS IN YOUTH PREPAREDNESS EDUCATION

Achieving the vision of a nationwide movement focused on youth preparedness and, ultimately, a nation of youth educated about and empowered to respond to and recover from disasters, requires both nongovernmental and governmental partners committed to this initiative of incorporating youth preparedness into their goals and strategies and encouraging youth preparedness in homes, schools and communities.

Numerous sectors of society bring important perspective and hands-on knowledge to the implementation of the National Strategy. Everyone, from the national level to the grassroots level, can play a role in the implementation of the National Strategy, including supporting or taking part in the following activities:

- Youth preparedness program development;
- Youth engagement messaging campaigns;
- Youth and school-based drills and exercises;
- Technical assistance for youth and school preparedness practitioners;
- Strategic partnership development; and
- Youth and school preparedness research and evaluation.

Appendix A: Partners in Youth Preparedness Education will identify the partners that affirm the National Strategy. These partners agree to promote youth preparedness using forums or media applicable to their industries. Implementation of the National Strategy will be an ongoing effort, but the objective is to have 30 partners affirm the National Strategy by September 2013. Inclusion of supporters in Appendix A will be ongoing, as organizations align with and agree to promote the youth preparedness movement.

PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE NATIONAL STRATEGY

Six main principles guided the development of this National Strategy. Youth preparedness efforts must:

1. Take a whole community approach that involves youth and their families, educators, nongovernmental and community groups, national organizations, and leaders at the federal, state and local levels. This whole community approach ensures multichannel delivery of messages, creating sound support for a culture of youth preparedness.
2. Acknowledge that youth preparedness is a responsibility that must be shared by all sectors of a community and those who govern it.
3. Include youth of all cultures, abilities, skills and backgrounds and those with access and functional needs in every aspect of disaster and emergency planning and preparedness.
4. Understand that strong and dynamic collaboration between youth preparedness program practitioners and emergency managers is central to successful youth preparedness education programs.
5. Ensure that youth programs are evidence based and age appropriate, and allow for repetition and exposure over time.
6. Recognize that youth preparedness strategies and policies must be ongoing and self-sustaining to be effective.





THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR YOUTH PREPAREDNESS EDUCATION—PRIORITY STEPS

The National Strategy includes nine priority steps that are critical to fulfilling the purpose of creating a prepared youth community. Each step is associated with one or more short- and long-term activities that define how the priority step will move forward. The success of the National Strategy will require ongoing input from stakeholders and a commitment to making youth preparedness education a part of every child's life.

1. Elevate the importance of youth preparedness learning programs at the national, state and local levels. Partners should demonstrate results and show how these programs are an integral part of the fabric of the community.

- **Develop and leverage youth-targeted preparedness curricula that are designed specifically to meet children's educational needs.** Children learn differently than adults, yet many existing disaster training programs and measures are geared toward more adult functions.^{xxi} It is important that youth-targeted programs be developed and designed specifically to meet the needs of youth and delineate their roles in disaster preparedness^{xii} FEMA's [Youth Preparedness Catalogue: Disaster Preparedness Education Programs and Resources](#)⁶ identifies many current programs.
- **Build youth preparedness programs at the state and local levels that contribute to overall community preparedness goals.** Research indicates that hazard education programs help youth increase hazard awareness and knowledge.^{xiii} Furthermore, children who have been actively involved in disaster preparedness measures have not only increased their awareness of hazards but also have been able to discuss actions they could take to protect their families and loved ones and to seek help should their families be affected. Ongoing evaluation of preparedness programs and initiatives is essential to identify best practices and demonstrate the value of these programs.^{xiv}
- **Develop communication channels for leaders of youth preparedness programs across the country to share best practices and highlight the importance of their work.** The 2010 National Summit on Youth Preparedness identified collaboration and sharing of best practices as one of the most important processes for advancing youth preparedness. This activity can work in many online formats, including posting data and information into a web-based portal or via social media such as a youth preparedness Facebook page or bulletin board pages that can serve as idea-exchange portals. Organizations also can make information part of their monthly print documents or routine electronic communications to members and local partners. These information-sharing tools, especially if they have a bulletin board or feedback function, also can serve to help program organizers troubleshoot or modify less effective areas of their programs and establish opportunities for nearby communities to unite for youth preparedness events and activities. Electronic channels also offer a great opportunity for friendly competition between communities, chapters, schools and others in the form of preparedness-related contests or games.

⁶Available under Tools at: <http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness>

- **Reinforce specific youth preparedness messaging before, during and after significant national and local disasters.** Those involved with youth preparedness programs should, as appropriate, use disasters and emergencies to showcase the ways in which their activities supported prevention and mitigation efforts and helped the community recover more quickly. States with programs—as well as individual communities and youth-serving organizations—can publicize their proactive efforts and positive outcomes through local media, perhaps by organizing a pre-disaster/preparedness event or a post-disaster/resilience event during which local elected officials congratulate the group for its readiness or how its preparedness actions mitigated disaster consequences.

2. Evaluate the quality and effectiveness of existing and new youth preparedness programs.

Development of guidance and tools that support program evaluation can contribute to an understanding of the effectiveness of, and ways to improve, programs.

- **Establish program guidance for youth preparedness initiatives.** Such guidance would provide a wealth of benefits, including incorporation of lessons learned and best practices from past experiences; provision of standardized components and formats that are customizable; provision for all persons, including individuals with access and functional needs; use of a common operating language; and ease of integration in working with emergency responders.

Organizations can best implement this activity by following nationally accepted youth education best practices and incorporating those best practices into their preparedness education content; reviewing existing programs will help identify such content. FEMA recently has developed [Youth Preparedness: Implementing a Community-Based Program](#)⁷, a guide written for communities and community-based organizations interested in starting or sustaining an effective youth disaster preparedness program.

- **Incorporate best practices and up-to-date protective actions.** Organizations should regularly review programs to ensure that the programs contain information on the most up-to-date, age-appropriate protective actions for the hazards covered by the curriculum, with a focus on actions that individuals can take during and in the immediate aftermath of a disaster to reduce their risk of injury or death. Organizations should also build programs around the key principles of emergency management (i.e., comprehensive, progressive, risk-driven, integrated, collaborative, coordinated, flexible and professional).^{xvi} It is important that practitioners look to research literature to inform their practice and that practitioners continue to review current literature in order to maintain an evidence base for their work.^{xvii}

⁷Available under Tools at:
<http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness>

- **Ensure the safety of youth participating in the preparedness program.** Organizations must implement protective actions that are broad enough to ensure that youth participating in disaster preparedness programs are kept safe. Securing background checks for all adults involved in direct contact with youth during training and exercises is an essential component of a safe environment. Most school instructors will already have completed a background check, as most schools require it. Program implementers will most likely have to assume responsibility for ensuring that other participating adults have passed a background check.
- **Use interactive practice and simulations, which often align with the learning styles of youth, and offer specific guidance and practice, which help youth learn exactly what actions are called for by different disasters, hazards, threats, and related events.** Further, preparedness educators should design programs in a way that allows youth to use their new knowledge and repeat skills they have learned. Simulations provide opportunities to practice using realistic scenarios that can better define and bring to life roles and responsibilities during disasters.^{xviii} Programs should also include drills, exercises, simulations, and other practical strategies for effective knowledge retention and show youth the “why” behind the lessons to make the learning experience more meaningful.
- **Include an evaluation strategy that incorporates process, output and outcome in each initiative.** Evaluation is essential in helping organizations determine whether programs are being run and delivered as effectively as possible, whether tweaks or mid-course corrections are advisable or necessary, and whether programs are resulting in the desired behaviors and actions. Furthermore, evaluation has the potential to provide a wealth of information including, for example, whether refresher materials are needed to help children retain information over time. Ongoing evaluation can serve as a means for assessing whether a program is being implemented as it was intended to be and for identifying whether services are “hitting the mark.”^{xix}

Evidence of program effectiveness is a critical component of attracting or maintaining program funding and the support of community and political youth preparedness education advocates. Organizations should integrate an evaluation component into all youth education efforts at the outset, including measures of evaluation, corresponding data to be collected, and means of collecting data. Organizations also should ensure that data collected from groups implementing a particular program can be aggregated and evaluated as a whole so that geographic, cultural or other aspects will not result in different success rates.

3. Support the implementation of youth preparedness learning programs.

No community, organization or school should face impediments in finding, obtaining and using preparedness education materials or developing a youth preparedness program.

- **Ensure access and remove barriers to implementing disaster education.** Numerous organizations already have disaster preparedness educational materials posted on the web—a list of many of these resources is available through FEMA’s [Youth Preparedness Catalogue: Disaster Preparedness Education Programs and Resources](#)⁸. These national and state-based resources are tailored to children and youth, and the Catalogue indicates the grade levels for which each is designed. The Catalogue also identifies key program components, including lessons with materials pertaining to preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery; interactive activities with families; guest speakers representing emergency management; and exercises practicing preparedness and response skills.
- **Implement programs in schools, before- and after-school programs, and youth clubs and societies.** Most individuals attend school at some stage in their lives, so schools are an ideal setting for disseminating preparedness information. There are also a myriad of opportunities available for programming in addition to those situated solely in schools. These opportunities include before- and after-school programs, faith-based youth and family programs, and camps. While regular gatherings allow for learning a wider set of skills and opportunities for repetition, almost any meeting of young people can serve as an opportunity for disaster preparedness education. The [Youth Preparedness Catalogue: Disaster Preparedness Education Programs and Resources](#)⁹ identifies existing community- and school-based programs.

Dorian Gregory, a 2012 FEMA Youth Preparedness Council member, is a youth leader in his community and is heavily involved in activities, including 4-H, Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD), the Mt. Calvary Baptist Church Good Gang Ministry, BETA Club, and Student Council. He has also volunteered in community service projects that assist the disadvantaged and community restoration projects. He was affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and was forced to relocate due to damages brought on by floodwaters. He has participated in post-hurricane and tornado volunteer opportunities as a member of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Branch, Louisiana.

- **Promote the importance of making technical assistance support available for those implementing/enhancing programs.** A small amount of technical assistance and coaching can reap huge dividends in terms of efficacy and positive results. Organizations can provide technical assistance in any number of ways, with telephone support (either individual or teleconference) and web-based support being especially cost-effective options to reach a national or geographically diverse audience. For example, the American Red Cross Youth Blog,^{xxi} developed by the American Red Cross National Youth Council, features a chat box for users to ask questions and talk with other Red Cross Youth about preparedness. Group technical assistance sessions offer great flexibility as well, plus technical assistance can be archived and accessed by those who need them at any time. County, state, regional or national technical assistance sessions can be effective ways to convey information to those implementing programs, and allow participants to get to know each other and exchange ideas and information in person.

⁸Available under Tools at: <http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness>

⁹Available under Tools at: <http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness>

- **Harness the power of youth-led and youth-serving organizations.** To make youth preparedness part of the fabric of our society, it is essential that as many organizations as possible be involved. Working with youth-led and youth-serving organizations with complementary programs can provide win–win opportunities. For example, the Girl Scouts of the USA has a youth preparedness patch program. The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) of the U.S. Air Force Auxiliary runs a teen cadet program for youth ages 12 to 18.^{xxiii} The program features instruction in the principles of aviation and aerospace flight, and it offers cadet encampments with activities in emergency services, engineering, technology, physical fitness, teambuilding, and flight training. The McGruff Club is supported by the National Crime Prevention Council and teaches youth about crime prevention and safety.^{xxiii} Local fire departments also often provide preparedness and response training opportunities for youth. Junior fire programs and fire explorer programs are also settings in which youth can step into leadership roles within organizations to serve their communities through preparedness activities.

4. Create positive relationships between youth and the first responder community.

- **Ensure that disaster preparedness education provides a window into the role of first responders.** Educating middle school–aged and older youth about disaster response allows them to better understand, appreciate and respect the critical life-saving role of first responders. Additionally, learning about the roles that first responders play in case of a disaster or emergency helps youth recognize how their personal ability to respond to a disaster can enable first responders to focus on others who are most in need. 9-1-1 for Kids targets individuals ages 4 through adult and offers information about the purpose and use of 9-1-1 as well as links to training materials for public safety officials, community groups, parents, teachers and children.
- **Integrate first responders into program delivery.** First responders already live and work in our communities and want to be viewed as the positive, contributing community members they are. Asking first responders to serve as speakers at schools, clubs or community events allows young people the opportunity to view them as individuals as well as professionals. Encouraging youth interaction with first responders also helps youth feel connected to caring, supportive and stable adults in the community. These mentoring relationships provide youth with supportive role models who can offer preparedness and safety guidance, and advocacy when needed, and help youth understand what it means to be connected with their communities.

5. Link youth preparedness to family and community participation, especially in communities where English may not be the first language spoken (or understood) among adults, in other underrepresented communities, and inclusive of individuals with access and functional needs.

- **Recognize youth as advocates of preparedness in the community.** Programs can offer child-friendly activities to do at home or school or in communities that can educate children on preparedness measures and encourage action at home and in the community. Children can then play a valuable role in communicating preparedness information to their friends and family members. This is especially helpful in families that speak more than one language or where English is not the primary language. ^{xxv}

Research indicates that children can become “translators” who are able to bring the most relevant messages back to their communities, helping to bridge cultural and technical gaps. Young people from multicultural households can offer an important perspective on how disaster education can move from the community at large to their homes and families. As individuals who often bridge two cultures, they know what messages are culturally appropriate and will best resonate within their communities. Organizations should train program implementers to understand that cultural competence encompasses more than simply language and ethnicity.

- **Ensure that youth with disabilities and youth with access and functional needs are included in education programs.** Organizations that implement programs should seek input and participation from underrepresented populations and those who serve them. These populations can include—but are not limited to—people with emotional, intellectual, physical or developmental disabilities or with communication disabilities, vision or hearing loss. To effectively reach and engage youth in these groups, programs must be inclusive and designed to reach them with sensitivity to and accommodation for their needs.

Christian Chowen, a 2012 FEMA Youth Preparedness Council member, has participated in two community evacuations in his community in Hawaii. Christian has a mobility disability and has become a qualified trainer, helping others with disabilities to prepare for emergencies through Hawaii’s Feeling Safe, Being Safe program. In the fall of 2011, Christian, along with his brother Joey, was a guest speaker at a preparedness seminar in Honolulu at the invitation of the Hawaii state coordinator for Feeling Safe, Being Safe. As a result, Christian met Marcie Roth, Director of the Office of Disability Integration and Coordination for FEMA. From this meeting, Christian received an invitation to visit FEMA in Washington, D.C. to present his work to Marcie Roth and Administrator Craig Fugate and share his efforts to help youth with disabilities in Hawaii to prepare for emergencies.

- **Enlist youth to support better understanding of community needs.** Youth can help identify language preferences, demographics and other aspects of neighborhoods or households that have relevance to disaster preparedness or response efforts. Helping to increase understanding of their neighborhoods encourages civic involvement and can help youth better understand why community engagement is essential in disaster preparedness.

6. Make school preparedness a key component of youth preparedness. Schools provide a natural venue for broad community participation, and school administrators already spend significant time and resources on school emergency issues. Schools should include preparedness programs as a core component of their emergency management plans, including curricula, drills and exercises for all local disasters, hazards, threats, and related events.

- **Appreciate that youth preparedness education taught in school supports disaster readiness anywhere.** Children can apply their preparedness knowledge to any situation, including fires, chemical spills, tornados, injuries, illness, violence and other hazards they may face at any time or in any setting. Their training should focus on local disasters, hazards, threats, and related events.
- **Recognize the benefits of youth preparedness to overall school preparedness.** Helping children gain a realistic view of disasters is vital in ensuring their comprehension and understanding when faced with a major disaster—particularly if it happens during the school day or at another time when they are separated from their parents and families. This knowledge can encourage children to develop civic-minded behavior and a sense of individual and collective responsibility for others in the school environment. It also can increase resilience in youth who face a disaster.
- **Offer opportunities for youth participation in school-based efforts and in all levels of youth preparedness.** Young people can have a unique and positive impact in motivating and empowering other young people and their communities, and their firsthand experience often provides them with the ability to identify areas in which preparedness needs are not being met.

On many of today’s issues affecting youth, young people have shown their ability to help guide the direction of programming in national youth-serving, advocacy and other organizations—providing insight to ensure that activities and approaches will resonate effectively with their peers. Young people can be just as passionate as first responders about emergency preparedness. Organizations that develop initiatives and educational modules should harness this enthusiasm and firsthand knowledge.

7. Build and strengthen productive partnerships among stakeholder agencies and organizations.

- **Use in-person and online gatherings and forums as opportunities for training, exchange of ideas and best practices, and overall support for program partners and implementers.** Meetings, such as the September 2010 National Summit on Youth Preparedness and the FEMA regional workshops, energize participants and allow for rich exchanges of ideas. The benefits of these forums and meetings extend well beyond their conclusion and greatly surpass the effort required to organize and hold them.

- **Convene local stakeholders on a regular basis to discuss community needs and programs.** Local leaders can collaboratively plan events designed to raise awareness of the importance of youth preparedness. These events can focus on policy matters related to implementing programs throughout a school district or community, and they may include members of Congress or state legislators as invited speakers or attendees. Members of FEMA’s Regional Advisory Councils can also play an integral role in these meetings.
- **Tap the ability of youth to be extraordinarily powerful advocates and leaders.** When youth work to introduce legislation or move community efforts forward, they can be a force with which to be reckoned. Youth-led committees, such as the American Red Cross National Youth Council and FEMA’s Youth Preparedness Council, are key resources in advancing this National Strategy. Local and state partners and stakeholders are encouraged to engage teens as spokesperson activists, training and building their capacity to deliver messages and speak to school administrators and boards of education, the media, county councils, state legislators and even members of Congress.

Teens also serve as powerful role models to younger children and enjoy the recognition and gratification of mentoring and teaching them, while building their own skills and confidence in the process. At a local programming level, youth can offer input into which currently available programs will resonate best with their peers. Local organizations should tap into the existing talent offered by teens and engage them in program implementation among younger children.

Cayman Kirkhart, a 2012 FEMA Youth Preparedness Council member, designed, planned, organized, publicized and led a community-wide disaster preparedness event that featured involvement from 13 organizations. These organizations included local fire rescue and police units, the American Red Cross, the National Guard, the Coast Guard Auxiliary, the Health Department and the Office of Emergency Management. Every half hour, for the 4-hour public event, he planned classes or demonstrations to educate families about disaster preparedness.

- **Facilitate regular interaction among stakeholders to raise awareness of what local groups are doing to ensure that disaster preparedness education reaches every young person in a community.** By working together towards common community goals, stakeholders can ensure that their messaging strategies and campaigns are comprehensive and coordinated.

8. Identify opportunities to embed youth preparedness in youth culture.

- **Identify young people to serve as ambassadors.** Young people, such as those who participated at the National Summit on Youth Preparedness and the FEMA workshops held across the country, effectively illustrate the value and need for youth preparedness. These young people serve as highly effective advisors and ambassadors, promoting the value of youth preparedness and readiness.
- **Identify local opportunities for stakeholders to display co-branded preparedness messages where youth and their families are present.** Such opportunities are everywhere—the slides shown before the previews at movie theaters, the table cards in local eateries, flyers at local libraries and stores patronized by parents, teens and younger children, and more. Organizations can create materials or customize existing template materials and ask for a business or other partner to share print costs and distribute or display them. Local partnerships should involve mutual commitments to cross-promote messages in a compelling way.
- **Use social media and other online venues to disseminate and engage youth in preparedness messages.** Entertainment companies, such as Disney, Sesame Street and Nickelodeon, can be highly effective in dissemination of preparedness messages. Facebook pages developed for youth preparedness and youth advocates and games and other social media applications are strong potential venues for delivery of youth preparedness messages and content. The American Red Cross Youth Network’s Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/521286634590554/> is a good example of how social media can be leveraged to enhance youth preparedness.

9. Design a sustaining, locally driven model for developing, designing and delivering programming.

- **Organizations should plan a program that meets the unique needs of the communities they serve.** There is no “one-size-fits-all” model for youth preparedness education at the local level; each program must meet the unique needs of the community and the threats it faces. That will require communities committing to having active involvement in and ownership of their programs. The concepts outlined in this National Strategy, and the efforts of committed partners, are critical for providing programmatic resources that can be adapted and customized locally. However, providing program modules is not enough; central to this effort is that organizations and communities are able to secure new local partnerships and funding sources so they can sustain youth preparedness programs over time. Strategies to support this important activity are included in [Youth Preparedness: Implementing a Community-Based Program](#)¹⁰. Additional ideas are being generated and shared through FEMA’s workshops and online forums, including IdeaScale at <https://fema.ideascale.com> and the National Preparedness Community website at <http://community.fema.gov>.

¹⁰Available under Tools at:
<http://www.ready.gov/youth-preparedness>



BUILDING MOMENTUM

The desired outcome of this National Strategy is a nation of empowered youth who help engage their families in disaster readiness, response, and recovery and become prepared citizens of today and tomorrow. Achieving this outcome requires partnerships with critical stakeholders at the federal, state and local levels, as well as national and local nongovernmental organizations and private sector leaders.

Numerous sectors of the community bring important perspective and hands-on knowledge to the implementation of the National Strategy. Children and teens will be crucial participants. Other participants include federal agencies and preparedness initiatives; national youth-serving community organizations; school, curriculum, and parent and teacher organizations; national emergency responder associations; and business, entertainment, media, technology and other organizations. All of these groups can play a key role in this effort, from advocating for programs to implementing and sustaining programs.

Since the National Summit on Youth Preparedness in September 2010, the topic of youth preparedness education has generated great enthusiasm and energy across the country. Now is the time for stakeholders across the spectrum of youth preparedness to commit to the National Strategy and support its implementation. The following activities have been initiated to help build momentum for this effort:

CREATE A FEMA YOUTH PREPAREDNESS COUNCIL

- This committee of young people builds on the success of and aligns with the American Red Cross National Youth Council and will help ensure that the voice and perspectives of youth are fully represented in advancing the National Strategy. The 2012 Youth Preparedness Council convened for an inaugural meeting in Washington, D.C., on August 6–7, 2012. Its membership comprises youth leaders, ages 13 to 17, from each of FEMA’s ten regions who are dedicated to public service and making a difference in their communities, and want to expand their impact as national advocates for youth preparedness. They are current and former students, youth Citizen Corps Council members, and members of youth clubs and faith-based organizations that are active in preparing their peers, families and neighborhoods for emergencies. FEMA also is encouraging its Regional Advisory Councils to include youth members to help strengthen their youth preparedness education efforts. The members of the Youth Preparedness Council are already implementing some of the activities identified in the National Strategy, and embody the positive impact that youth can have in preparing themselves, their families and their communities.

OBTAIN STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT AND COMMITMENTS

- FEMA, the Department of Education and the Red Cross are working to engage organizations representing a broad range of sectors and that can promote youth empowerment, facilitate acceptance, and generate momentum around the National Strategy.

LAUNCH THE NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR YOUTH PREPAREDNESS EDUCATION

- The leadership of FEMA, the Department of Education and the Red Cross will host an event to bring together partners and celebrate the launch of this critical initiative.



CONCLUSION

Youth face particular risks in disaster situations. However, substantial benefits can be reaped from empowering and educating youth with regards to disaster preparedness and response. This National Strategy seeks to couple national attention on emergency and disaster preparedness with community action that focuses specifically on youth readiness for disasters and related events. Organizations that focus on youth are encouraged to read this National Strategy, determine what role they can play in furthering a community of prepared youth, and affirm the National Strategy.

ENDNOTES

We are providing the following information and links to third party sites for your reference. FEMA does not endorse any non-government website, company, or application. All information provided here comes directly from the entities sponsoring each program.

- ⁱUNICEF. "UNICEF and Disaster Risk Reduction." (p. 3) Retrieved on January 8, 2013 from http://www.unicef.org/files/DDR_final.pdf.
- ⁱⁱU.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2012). Crisis Response and Disaster Resilience 2030: Progress Report Highlighting the 2010–2011 Insights of the Strategic Foresight Initiative. Retrieved September 19, 2012 from <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=4995>.
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- ^vLa Greca, A. M., Silverman, W. K., Vernberg, E. M., & Roberts, M. C. (2002). Introduction. In A. M. La Greca, W. K. Silverman, E. M. Vernberg, & M. C. Roberts (Eds.), *Helping Children Cope With Disasters and Terrorism* (pp. 3–8). Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association.
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- ^xNational Commission on Children and Disasters. (2010). 2010 Report to the President and Congress. Washington, D.C. Retrieved September 21, 2012 from <http://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/nccd/20110426214356/http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ohsepr/nccdreport/index.html>.
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- ^{xii}U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. (Summer 2010). Bringing youth preparedness education to the forefront: A literature review and recommendations. *Citizen Preparedness Review*, 6. Retrieved June 5, 2012, from <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=6744>.
- ^{xiii}Ronan, K., & Johnston, D. (2005). *Promoting Community Resilience in Disasters: The Role for Schools, Youth, and Families* (pp. 49–70). New York: Springer.
- ^{xiv}U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency. (Summer 2010). Bringing youth preparedness education to the forefront: A literature review and recommendations. *Citizen Preparedness Review*, 6. Retrieved June 5, 2012, from <http://www.fema.gov/library/viewRecord.do?id=6744>.

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- ^{xxi}American Red Cross. (2012). Red Cross Youth. Retrieved September 10, 2012, from <http://redcrossyouth.org>.
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- ^{xxiv}9-1-1 for Kids. (2012). Retrieved September 10, 2012, from <http://www.911forkids.com>.
- ^{xxv}Campbell, N. R., Ayala, G. X., Litrwnik, A. J., Slymen, D. J., Zavala, F., & Elder, J. P. (2001). Evaluation of a first aid and home safety program for Hispanic migrant adolescents. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 20(4), 258–265.

APPENDIX A: PARTNERS IN YOUTH PREPAREDNESS EDUCATION

Inclusion of supporters in Appendix A will be ongoing, as organizations align with and agree to promote the youth preparedness movement.

- American Red Cross
- Boy Scouts Troop 9 Petaluma, CA
- City of Costa Mesa Fire Department
- City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Department
- Civil Air Patrol
- Corporation for National and Community Service
- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Department of Youth Affairs, Guam
- Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Girl Scouts of the USA
- Guam Homeland Security/Office of Civil Defense
- Harvest Christian Academy CERT
- HOSA-Future Health Professionals
- International Association of Emergency Managers
- Medical Reserve Corps
- National Center for Missing & Exploited Children
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration/National Weather Service
- Northeast Nevada Citizen Corps/CERT Program
- Points of Light Foundation
- San Marcos Consolidated Independent School District
- Save the Children
- Simon Sanchez High School Tourism Academy
- Texas School Safety Center
- U.S. Department of Education
- YMCA
- Youth Service America



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