Disaster Preparedness Checklist for Families with Children with Hearing or Vision Loss

Key Planning Steps

☐ Complete an Emergency Information Form (EIF) for your child
   - An EIF is a list of your child’s medical conditions, needs, medications, equipment, and care providers. Visit this resource page for examples of an EIF.
   - Ask your doctor to help you fill out your EIF and update it each year.
   - Keep a paper copy with your child’s medical supplies and take a photo of the EIF on your phone.

☐ Gather supplies your family will need in an emergency
   - Consider items your family needs to survive for several days at home (e.g. food, water, medicines, supplies).
   - Gather items you will need if you are forced to leave your home (e.g. a water-tight container for text magnifiers, hearing aid or cochlear implant and extra batteries) and keep them in an easy to carry container or “go bag.”
   - Review these items with your child’s care team. For more information, visit this resource page.

☐ Create a family communication plan
   - Plan and practice how your family will communicate if you are separated during an emergency.
   - Write down contact information for your family and important people (e.g. doctors, care team, schools, service providers). Keep with your important documents and as a photo on your phone.
   - Send your child to school with a “backpack emergency card” that includes this information.

Communicating During Emergencies

☐ Have your child wear some form of identification a medical ID bracelet or necklace (medical ID bracelet or necklace, or place a tag on your child’s phone or shoe) with your child’s name, medical conditions, and important contact information.

☐ Have your child carry a Communication Card to help others understand their communication needs. Include whether your child needs an ASL interpreter or is non-verbal.

☐ Teach your child simple statements to use when communicating with first responders. Introduce your child to local first responders before a disaster.

☐ If your child uses a device to communicate, keep batteries or back-up chargers in the event of a power outage.

☐ Have your child practice alternative ways to communicate, like with a communication board, in case regular devices do not work or are damaged or ASL interpreters are unavailable.

☐ Talk with your child’s school or daycare about the plan for caring for your child if an emergency occurs while they are at school. Plan how you will connect with your child.

☐ If applicable ask your child’s specialists or speech therapists to help communicate with your child about emergencies. Social stories can help your child learn what to expect in an emergency.
Be Ready for a Power Outage or an Evacuation

In case you have to leave your home in an emergency:
- **Keep a “go bag” ready** with things your child may need:
  - Your child’s EIF, Communication Card, and copies of medical insurance cards
  - Your child’s medications
  - An emergency whistle
  - Walking aids (e.g. folding cane)
  - Phone number for interpreter services
  - Hearings aids or cochlear implant, text magnifier, and batteries or charger kept in a water-tight container
  - Flashlight to help with signing or lip reading
  - Favorite toys and activities
- **Plan for where you will go** – ask family or friends in advance if you can stay with them, or plan to go to a hotel or shelter.
- **Practice your evacuation plan** with your family often – at least once every six months.
- If applicable, **consider your child’s service animal’s needs**

**Helping Your Child Cope**

- Review and practice your plan with your child. This will increase confidence and give your child a sense of control.
- Introduce your child to local first responders at community events or a station visit to help your child get more comfortable and help responders communicate with your child.
- Identify trustworthy information sources that can accommodate your child’s abilities (e.g. closed captioning, ASL interpreters).

**Before**
- Plan for activities that can keep your child occupied and help their routine from getting disrupted.
- Consider comfort foods, toys, or other items that help keep them calm and items that can reduce sensory overload.

**During**
- Look out for any changing behaviors and discuss any changes with your child’s doctors/therapists.

**Questions About Planning for Your Child’s Unique Needs?**

Your child’s doctors and care team know your child and can help you plan for their unique needs during a disaster. Here are some good questions to discuss with them:
- How do I acquire light-up smoke alarms or bed shaker alarms for my child?
- How can I help my child stay calm and accommodate their communication needs?
- How might disruption of services and therapies affect my child?
- How do I get an emergency supply of medications for my child?
- How can I connect with other parents who have children with similar needs?

**Additional Resources Available**
- Local information resource guide
- Checklists for other special medical needs
- What to expect at an emergency shelter

**Keep these things handy** in case you have to stay at home for several days without power:
- Things that help calm your child, such as favorite foods, clothing, blankets, and games
- Extra batteries for hand-held electronics, communication devices, and portable chargers (keep them charged)
- A car charger in case you can’t power your devices at home