



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

2025-2029
Disaster Plan

Introduction. The New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF or the Department) is the primary state agency providing child protection and child welfare services to support and strengthen New Jersey's families. The Department maintains approximately 67 work sites around the state and is staffed by about 6,600 employees. DCF provides services to over 131,000 constituents each month through an array of direct services and a network of providers. In a system as large as DCF's, the need for formal emergency planning and practice drills in anticipation of possible critical events is clear. Critical events, such as Hurricane Katrina, Super Storm Sandy, and the Covid-19 pandemic, reinforce that comprehensive emergency preparedness plans, including consideration of evacuation centers, transportation, education, staffing, and medical care, are essential to ensure the safety and protection of the children, youth, women and families served by the Department, as well as Department staff.

The DCF Disaster Plan may be activated for events or disasters that impact one community or municipality, multiple counties, the entire state, multiple states, or even the nation. Utilizing the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Incident Command System (ICS) and an all-hazards approach, the plan integrates the following four critical disaster cycle elements: (1) preparedness, (2) response, (3) recovery, and (4) mitigation. For additional information on these elements, see *the Phases of DCF Disaster Planning and Response* section below. Based on the National Response Framework model,¹ this plan emphasizes a comprehensive, collaborative response before, during, and following a disaster to ensure ongoing provision of DCF's services and continuity of DCF's business operations. DCF's Office of Emergency Management (DCF OEM) coordinates and maintains DCF's disaster plan and associated documents and facilitates coordination through established connections with the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness (OHSP), the New Jersey Office of Emergency Management (NJ OEM), the New Jersey Department of Health (DOH), the New Jersey Department of Human Services (DHS), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and other state and non-state department entities.

The DCF Disaster Plan, which is included in the DCF Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP), clearly delineate the delegations of authority, order of succession and the assignment of responsibility in the event of an emergency. The COOP identifies the essential functions of DCF, as well as the essential employees that will sustain those functions. This plan is intended to be a fluid, ever-changing document subject to bi-annual review and revision based on after action reviews and supplemented by guidance prepared and issued by the Commissioner or designees as needed.

Mission Statement. The mission of the DCF Disaster Plan is to ensure resilience by providing a framework for organizational response to emergencies. An organized, efficient response to all conceivable hazards allows DCF to serve New Jersey's children, youth, women and families confidently and consistently. The goals of the plan are as follows:

- To provide structure to the efforts of DCF's Divisions and Offices, including the Children's System of Care (CSOC), Division of Family and Community Partnerships (FCP), Division on Women (DOW), Office of Education (OOE), State Central Registry (SCR), Division of Child Protection and Permanency (CP&P), Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU), Office of Licensing (OOL) and DCF's various operational, business, and fiscal offices, to ensure a comprehensive model of business continuity,

¹ https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-04/NRF_FINALApproved_2011028.pdf

<https://www.gsa.gov/governmentwide-initiatives/emergency-response/the-national-response-framework#:~:text=The%20National%20Response%20Framework%20describes,of%20the%20other%20mission%20areas.>

- To support the continuous and uninterrupted provision of child protective services, child behavioral health services, services to children and youth with developmental disabilities, services to youth with substance use disorders, support and services to homeless youth, and services to survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence, including shelters, DCF educational programming, and childcare, and
- To define DCF's role as an identified support agency to DHS in its role as the state coordinating agency for Emergency Support Function (ESF) #6 agencies.

Purpose. The DCF Disaster Plan will:

- Enhance emergency management functions, responsibilities, policy, and guidance.
- Develop and distribute disaster specific guidance relative to any new and emergent disasters.
- Support the actions of DHS regarding coordination of ESF #6 activities as requested.
- Ensure DCF business continuity and coordination with OHSP and NJ OEM.
- Provide immediate systematic and coordinated response and subsequent recovery from any unplanned interruption impacting normal standard operating procedures.
- Document strategies, resources and procedures that will be utilized to respond to any interruption of operations.
- Reduce possible impact of emergencies on continuity of operations.
- Define assumptions and policies.
- Facilitate relationships for emergency response at the state, county and local level.
- Ensure the safety, well-being and success of children, youth, families and communities within established NJ OEM protocols, executive orders and state plans.
- Identify, locate and continue availability of services for children under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster.
- Establish an interoperable communications system and facilitate communication with DCF staff, providers and families, including those who are displaced because of a disaster.
- Protect essential program records and information systems.
- Coordinate services and share information with other states.

To ensure emergency preparedness, DCF-OEM collaborates with New Jersey state departments and various non-government organizations. DCF supports DHS coordination of ESF #6 activities. In this role, DHS is responsible for coordinating state resources to support other voluntary agencies in the performance of mass care, emergency assistance, housing and human services missions. DCF-OEM manages various emergency planning efforts, including logistical support and tracks resource requests through the Emergency Management Mapping and Information Tracking (EMMIT) system from the New Jersey State Police (NJSP) and NJ OEM.

DCF-OEM addresses workplace diversity, race and gender equity, and inclusion to enhance services to the families we serve through planning, training and exercises to address the whole DCF community, including leadership, staff, and constituents. DCF's approach to working with the children, youth and families is discussed throughout the DCF Disaster Plan. DCF recognizes the critical need for ongoing services to vulnerable populations, including children with intellectual and developmental disabilities, individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, and victims of domestic violence. DCF has established partnerships within its contracted provider network to address the needs of children, youth and families with diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. DCF-OEM is a part of the State-led Disaster Housing Task Force that convenes

post-disaster to address issues, barriers to housing needs for marginalized groups and collaborates with local OEMs to ensure adequate sheltering for impacted populations.

DCF's Office of Diversity, Equity and Belonging (ODEB) was created to support the Department in its transformation to an anti-racist and equitable organization. ODEB's focus areas include human resources, operations, communications and training and staff development. For additional information on ODEB, see DCF's 2026-2029 Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), Section 3, *Plan for Enacting the State's Vision*, Goal 3. In the upcoming year, DCF-OEM will review the existing Disaster Preparedness Response training curriculum and identify opportunities to integrate racial and gender equity content into the training. These efforts will support DCF to include equitable practices into training, planning and coordination around DCF's response to disasters to address inequitable outcomes families from marginalized communities experience during and after a disaster.

Assumptions. Identifying planning assumptions helps the viability of the plan and supports DCF's efforts to maintain continuity of standard business operations and services during a disaster. The following planning assumptions can be made for DCF emergency response:

- As directed in the federal Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (P.L. 109-288), all child welfare agencies develop disaster plans.
- As directed in New Jersey Executive Order #5 of 2006, DCF and the Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness cooperate to respond to any incident/disaster.
- As dictated in New Jersey Executive Order #50 of 2005, all DCF senior staff and other staff members with emergency response responsibility shall have completed the NIMS Awareness Course: National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction.
- DCF acts as a support agency to DHS in coordination of ESF# 6 as requested.
- This plan is used to provide direction to the DCF response statewide, regionally, or locally, depending upon the scope and location of the incident/disaster.
- Incidents are typically managed at the lowest possible geographic, organizational and jurisdictional level.
- Each DCF worksite location has a site evacuation plan.
- Each DCF functional component has a designated order of succession.
- The plan supports the ongoing 24-hour operation of the SCR, call center, and State Domestic Violence hotline system.
- The plan supports the ongoing off hours operation of the DCF Special Response Unit system.
- The plan supports the emergency provision of education services to all students of DCF's OOE.
- All incidents with the potential to disrupt or impact the functional operation of a DCF component are documented.
- Emergency notification of a response to an incident or disaster is provided.
- Preservation of essential case management records is completed through New Jersey's comprehensive child welfare information system, NJSPIRIT.
- Perform Care maintains a disaster plan, which is shared with DCF every six months. Each CSOC provider of mental health, substance use and intellectual and developmental disability services has developed and implemented a safety plan. The Contracted Systems Administrator remains operational and Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS) are dispatched at the discretion of both CSOC and the MRSS provider.

- The plan supports the ongoing operation of all DCF administrative, area, and local offices as determined necessary and appropriate and to remain safe, accessible and operational. The plan also provides for the use of all state-owned and leased DCF facilities on a flexible and extended schedule.
- The plan provides for the use of flexible and extended work hours, including staggered shifts, alternate worksites, and telework.
- Agencies contracted with, funded by and/or licensed by DCF are valued partners.
- Volunteer organizations, such as FEMA, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and other agencies, are valued partners, especially in the event of a disaster.

Disaster Definitions and Hazard Categories. To determine when this plan is utilized, it is critical to define disaster from a federal and statewide standpoint. Likewise, it is essential to outline and understand various hazard categories that require additional consideration.

Federal Disaster Definition. According to FEMA, a disaster is a natural catastrophe, technological accident, human caused event or occurrence of such severity and magnitude that normally results in deaths, injuries and property damage and that cannot be managed through the routine procedures and resources of local government. It requires immediate, coordinated, and effective response by multiple government and private sector organizations to meet human needs and speed recovery².

Any hurricane, tornado, storm, flood, high water, wind-driven water, tsunami, earthquake, volcanic eruption, landslide, mudslide, snowstorm, drought, fire, explosion, or other catastrophe, natural or man-made, in any part of the United States that, in the determination of the President, causes a large-scale community incident and damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance, above and beyond emergency services by the Federal government, to supplement the efforts and resources of States, local governments and disaster relief organizations.

Disasters can be categorized as natural, accidental, and manmade. Natural disasters can include hurricanes, floods, and tornadoes, certain categories of fires, earthquakes, and severe storms and pandemics. Accidental disasters can include chemical spills, gas explosions, airplane crashes, automobile or boating accidents. Manmade disasters can include war, assault, sabotage, hostage situations, arson, murder, economic collapse/crisis, and acts of terrorism that can be chemical, biological, nuclear/radiological, explosive, cyber, and may occur concurrently.

Although community incidents may be insufficient in scope or magnitude to activate a presidential declaration, they may still impact the affected community. A community incident damages the bonds linking people together and impairs the prevailing sense of community. This type of event strikes at the vulnerabilities of people that are going about their normal routines. An example of a community incident that does not trigger a disaster declaration could be a shooting in a public facility.

The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act (Stafford Act) is a federal law designed to bring an orderly and systematic means of federal natural disaster assistance for state and local governments in carrying out their responsibilities to aid citizens³. It created the system in place today by which a presidential disaster declaration of an emergency triggers

² [X-GLO.DOC \(fema.gov\)](https://www.fema.gov/x-glo-doc)

³ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/COMPS-2977/pdf/COMPS-2977.pdf>

financial and physical assistance through FEMA. The Stafford Act gives FEMA the responsibility for coordinating government-wide relief efforts.

State Disaster Definition. The State of New Jersey defines a disaster as any unusual incident resulting from natural or unnatural causes which endangers the health, safety or resources of the residents of one or more municipalities of the State, and which is or may become too large in scope or unusual in type to be handled in its entirety by regular municipal operating services.⁴ This includes a community incident in New Jersey that in the determination of the Governor causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant activation of the State Emergency Operations Plan.

An event is considered traumatic if it is so stressful to the people affected that, if the crisis was left unresolved, ongoing psychological disturbance would impair emotional, social, physical or professional functioning. The crisis is caused by the stresses of either a natural, accidental or manmade emergency/disaster the scope, nature and unexpectedness of which overwhelms normal defenses, social supports and sense of security.

To reduce the effect of emergency/disaster related stress on individuals, appropriate anticipatory guidance and crisis counseling must be provided as soon as possible following the event. Crisis counseling services should also be coordinated with the services of the first line public and private agencies responsible for the health and safety of New Jersey's citizens.

Additional Hazard-Specific Categories. The following hazard-specific categories would be assessed in light of specific events of medium or high probability in the state and vary from region to region:

- Air transportation incidents and serious transportation accidents,
- Civil disturbances/contractual disputes,
- Coastal hazards,
- Communicable disease outbreaks/epidemics,
- Drought,
- Earthquake,
- Economic collapse/crisis,
- Fires and explosions, including structural wildfires, etc.,
- Floods and flash floods, including coastal and inland,
- Hailstorms,
- Hurricanes and nor'easters,
- Release of hazardous materials,
- Heat waves,
- Nuclear power plant incidents,
- Operational issues including government shutdown,
- Technological emergencies and manmade accidents,
- Terrorism (for additional information on terrorism, see below),
- Tornadoes and severe thunderstorms,
- Unexpected utility failures,
- Winter storms,
- Structural collapses,
- Active shooter and active assailant,

⁴ N.J.S.A. App.A:9-33.1; [State of Emergency | Frequently Asked Questions | NJOEM](#)

- Bomb threats, and
- Pandemics.

Categories of need would be examined in cases that are less probable but potentially more catastrophic, such as the effects of bioterrorism or nuclear attack.

Terrorism. Terrorism is the unlawful use of or threatened use of force or violence against people or property to intimidate a government or civilian population in the furthering of political or social objectives.⁵ The State of New Jersey is vulnerable to the effects of terrorist events in the form of chemical, biological, nuclear or cyber-attack, weapons and firearms, fusion, weapons of mass destruction and animal disease. Potential targets include schools, shopping centers, healthcare facilities, airports, nuclear power plants, transportation infrastructure, metro chemicals, pharmaceuticals and major public events of various venues.

Intentional contamination is also a factor via intentional contamination of agriculture and livestock by Foreign Animal Diseases. NJ OEM has noted potential terrorist targets in the State Emergency Operations Plan and the State's Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment document. NJ OEM has also identified potential areas for the release of hazardous materials and biological agents. The priority of securing the safety of the children and families we serve will be inherent in protecting our critical infrastructure, key resources, and assets. This will be accomplished by the establishment and maintenance of effective communication and coordination between and among DCF and the various state and private partners with the goal of a reduction in vulnerability and rapid recovery from a disaster. DCF-OEM will follow all command protocols and procedures designated by the NJ OEM in the event of a terrorist event.

Essential Services and Priorities During a Disaster. During a declared disaster, DCF will focus on the continuation of the following operations and services:

1. Child protection response, including operation of the 24/7 SCR to accept allegations of child abuse and neglect;
2. Monitoring of and support for children placed by CP&P in resource homes, residential placement settings or treatment programs, including worker visits and/or other authorized contact with youth and families;
3. Establishment of alternate non-congregate care settings as necessary;
4. The uninterrupted provision of behavioral health, substance use disorder, and intellectual and developmental disability services to CSOC clients;
5. The continuous operation of domestic violence shelters, other shelter facilities, and housing programs operated or licensed by DCF or a contracted provider;
6. The continuous operation of child care licensure;
7. The evacuation or relocation of any facility or home providing care or support to DCF clients, if warranted;
8. Provision of services to homeless youth and youth at risk of homelessness;
9. Preservation of communications systems to ensure ready communication between providers, parents, children and DCF officials;
10. Preservation of IT infrastructure, systems of record, and confidentiality; and
11. IT supports to enable continuity of operations and ensure mission essential functions can continue from remote locations.

⁵ [X-GLO.DOC \(fema.gov\)](https://www.fema.gov/x-glo-doc)

Child protection and permanency services necessitated by or otherwise arising from the occurrence of a declared disaster will be the responsibility of CP&P. Furthermore, CP&P's capability to respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster and to provide services in those cases will be met by working cooperatively with NJ OEM, OHSP and other State departments, divisions, bureaus and offices. Efforts to respond to cases and provide services, will be carried out in cooperation with and assisted by a variety of county and local offices of emergency response and many private and volunteer human services and emergency response agencies. As previously mentioned, DCF is identified as a support agency to DHS regarding the coordination of ESF#6 if necessary. Coordination with other state and federal entities will be undertaken by the DCF-OEM.

Phases of DCF Disaster Planning and Response. DCF's disaster response consists of four phases: (1) preparedness, (2) response, (3) recovery, and (4) mitigation. Each phase is described below.

- The **Preparedness Phase** ensures the capability to continue essential functions and operations across a variety of potential emergencies or disasters. This phase includes the identification of essential functions, assessment, plan development, and participation in exercises and drills. DCF-OEM is responsible for assisting to develop operational unit or office specific plans, including evaluation, compilation, technical assistance, and approval. These individual plans are incorporated into the department-wide plan. Preparedness objectives include:
 - o Continued performance of mission essential functions and operations,
 - o Protection and preservation of essential program records and IT systems and information,
 - o Minimizing operational disruption,
 - o Minimizing the damage and loss of resources,
 - o Mitigating the effects of the emergency,
 - o Minimizing the crisis response time, and
 - o Efficient plan activation and continuity of operations.

The planning and preparedness phase encompasses the time frame before a disaster. Preparedness activities include plan development, identification of alternate work sites and facilities support, establishment of designations of authority and orders of succession, establishing interoperable communications, identifying and designating emergency relocation personnel, ensuring ongoing staff training in disaster preparedness, developing and updating resource inventory and directory, completing a comprehensive review of plan with all staff, annual updates and revisions of the plan and COOP, educating all staff on the need for personal preparedness, establishment of memorandums of understanding and mutual aid agreements, participation in trainings, exercises, drills, testing and plans, and communications and preparedness messaging, e.g., Portal, DCF Emergency Hotline, etc.

- The **Response Phase** encompasses actions taken immediately before, during or after an emergency occurs to ensure effective maintenance of essential functions, including activation of the DCF emergency notification protocol, as well as briefing, assigning and deploying staff. Responses may involve:
 - o Providing assistance to local emergency response entities, support of agencies contracted to or licensed by DCF;
 - o Accessing disaster mental health services;
 - o Coordinating the movement of children or families that are displaced;

- Re-deployment of staff and/or obtaining additional staff to address staffing shortages and absenteeism;
- Utilization of alternate work sites and/or flexibility/expansion of work hours;
- Utilization of residential facilities;
- Acquisition of alternate sites with procurement of necessary supports;
- Identifying gaps and strategies for needed resources;
- Providing disaster related guidance and resources to staff, community providers, families, and licensed childcare providers;
- Submitting resource requests via NJ OEM or other avenues to support health and life safety. Assist in the procurement and distribution of personal protective equipment or other equipment and supplies needed during a pandemic or other emergency event;
- Monitoring general updates and data analysis from the NJ Regional Operations Intelligence Center (ROIC) to maintain situational awareness and provide operational status to DCF during the disaster;
- Monitoring overall COOP levels of residential facilities to ensure continuity of operations and identify when to enact mass care protocols; and
- Responding to unmet needs of children and families to ensure safety and well-being.

Specific response activities based upon function will be identified by the unit, facility, or office in their Emergency Action Plan, as well as by this Disaster Plan. DCF activities will be delineated in the Organization and Assignment of Responsibility portion of this plan. Actions to be taken by entities participating in the DCF response will be delineated in plans developed by those entities.

Response activities include:

- Developing an Action Plan outlining how the Department would continue to operate,
 - Confirming or establishing communication capabilities implementing internal and external communications protocols,
 - Assessing workforce and workplace availability, deploy personnel and address any reductions in workforce.
 - Managing and/or coordinating the notification and response,
 - Managing ESF #6 support responsibility,
 - Initiating alternate facility process, as needed and provision of supports and any physical plant requirements,
 - Deploying transportation resources, as needed,
 - Evaluating performance and back up of IT systems,
 - Documenting response actions taken and costs,
 - Documenting for federal reimbursement, including photographs and video recordings,
 - Implementing staff support protocols, and
 - Working in conjunction with state and federal partners on the establishment of new programs in response to identified gaps.
- The **Recovery Phase** initiates at the start of DCF's return to normal operations. Continued access to disaster mental health services or a move to the provision of long-term treatment services may be required. Integration of response and recovery activity is the desired status as recovery from an event begins. Additional activities will be identified to hasten return to normal levels of operations. If a Presidential Declaration is made and

DCF facilities were impacted, DCF-OEM will lead the processing of the Department's reimbursement request in coordination with the NJ OEM's Recovery Bureau.

During this phase, short and long-term recovery goals and objectives must be identified. Short-term recovery goals may include:

- Continued provision of essential services,
- Establishing priorities for reinstatement of various systems and operations,
- Establishing timeframes for acceptable reinstatement of system and operational levels,
- Identification of resources necessary to restore operations,
- Continuing established communication and staff support protocols,
- Application for federal assistance via federal grants, and
- Participation in any newly developed programs relative to response.

Long-term recovery goals may include:

- Strategic planning and mitigation, including how to adapt processes and operations,
- Management and coordination of recovery activities,
- Assessing response and recovery costs,
- Developing and implementing mitigation goals/activities,
- Debriefing and capturing lessons learned,
- Staff recognition, and
- Building new systems with improved response and strengthened infrastructure.

- The **Mitigation Phase** initiates at the end of the Recovery Phase. Mitigation actions reduce or eliminate long-term risk to DCF staff, children, families, facilities and environment from all hazards with a goal of maximized disaster resistance. An evaluation of protection, preparedness, response, and recovery activities will be completed during this phase of the process. DCF-OEM will take proactive measures to identify, develop, implement and evaluate strategies to reduce Department-wide vulnerability to all hazards by organizing resources, assessing risks, developing a mitigation plan, implementing the plan and monitoring progress. Recommendations will be made for actions and changes in protocols/practices to help reduce the impact of future incidents.

Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities. DCF is composed of direct service divisions, including, but not limited to, CP&P, CSOC, DOW, and FCP, as well as operational divisions with oversight for areas, such as administration, management, information technology (IT), policy, legal and legislative affairs, training, communications, and others. For additional information on DCF's divisions, see DCF's 2025-2029 CFSP, *Introduction*. Descriptions of the assignment of responsibilities follows.

Administration. DCF's Table of Organization⁶ reflects a direct reporting relationship between the Office of the Commissioner and the following staff and offices: Office of the Chief of Staff; First Deputy Commissioner; Deputy Commissioner – Administration; Deputy Commissioner – Policy, Legal Affairs and Compliance; Assistant Commissioner of CP&P; Assistant Commissioner of CSOC; Assistant Commissioner of FCP; Director of DOW; and Director of Communications. In the event of an emergency requiring activation of the New Jersey State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), this leadership team will organize and respond from the Commissioner's conference room on the 7th floor, 50 East State Street, Trenton or via video or conference calls

⁶ [TO.pdf \(nj.gov\)](#)

as needed. Unless specifically called to the SEOC, the Commissioner will lead efforts to maintain DCF's essential functions and will be provided ongoing information relative to response efforts and any NJ OEM requirements of DCF. Information and resource requests will be provided to and from the DCF-OEM personnel assigned to the SEOC.

Child Protection and Permanency Services. The provision of child protection and welfare services requires the continuity of operations of DCF's SCR, CP&P area and local offices, and IAIU. Office, unit and/or building specific plans for the continuity of operations are in place at each work location, including all area offices and local offices. These plans specify contact persons, site coordinators, relocation coordinators, alternate worksites, numbers of employees and other information critical to maintaining the provision of these essential services to the children and families of the State of New Jersey.

DCF contracts with the Rutgers University Francois-Xavier School of Nursing for the Child Health Unit (CHU) Program, which provides health care case management for all children in out-of-home placement. CHU nurses in every CP&P local office provides case management for the health care needs of all children in out-of-home placement. For additional information on the CHU program, see DCF's 2025-2029 Health Care Oversight and Coordination Plan. Anticipatory guidance on emergency preparedness directs resource parents to make a plan that includes a meeting location, a contact person, and important phone numbers. If a child or family member has a special need or physical limitation, CHU nurses remind the family to register with the local police, fire or OEM. CHU nurses also provide education about the type of supplies to include in an emergency kit, the importance of maintaining health information about children in one place, how to care for the emotional needs of children, and other preparedness resources. CHU nurses review the guidance on emergency preparedness with resource parents at each home nursing visit, with new resource parents if a child moves to another placement, and with caregivers upon reunification or adoption.

State Central Registry. SCR is DCF's 24-hour, seven-day a week hotline for reporting allegations of child abuse and neglect and contracts, licenses and/or funds a variety of child placement and child and family support services through many private agencies within this state and others. SCR has been established as the "hub" for DCF internal communications in the event of a disaster. All providers have been advised to contact SCR in the event of a disaster to advise regarding moves of children under CP&P supervision, movement of domestic violence programs, any issues pertaining to CSOC funded programs, and for licensed childcare providers to notify DCF if they close or relocate.

Resource Family Homes. Disaster preparedness, response, and recovery for DCF resource family homes will be provided in accordance with the DCF Manual of Requirements for Resource Family Parents.⁷ This will be executed in cooperation with county and local emergency response entities. It will further be carried out as indicated in the DCF Resource Family Disaster Plan completed and maintained by the resource family home. All child residents of resource family homes shall receive age-appropriate instruction on how to evacuate the home safely in the event of fire or other emergency.

Any event impacting a large area of the state and requiring the movement of large numbers of children under the custody, care and supervision of DCF will result in a Department-wide assessment to determine the existence of any vacant residential beds that may be utilized in the disaster response effort. Actions will be disaster specific. Alternate sites may need to be

⁷ <https://www.nj.gov/dcf/providers/licensing/laws/RFmanual.pdf>

established and utilized. In the event of a disaster, such as a pandemic, consideration for issues, e.g., social distancing, will be a factor.

It is the responsibility of the caregivers with which a child resides at the time of an event to care for that child until such time as an appropriate alternate site and /or caregiver(s) is identified. It is also the caregiver's responsibility to assure that each child is provided with documentation of identity, as well as any medical information, school records, immunization records, court orders and physician and agency contact information, if available. If it becomes necessary to transfer care of a child, it is imperative that the child continue to receive food, clothing, medication (if needed) and emotional support and supervision. It is incumbent upon the caregiver to communicate any change in location of residence to DCF through SCR. It is the obligation of the caregiver to seek out information pertaining to DCF operations during the tenure of the event via the DCF webpage, DCF correspondence, digital or social media and newspapers. Any information received relative to a change in residence for a child receiving services from DCF will be entered into NJ SPIRIT, DCF's Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System per DCF protocol as soon as possible.

DCF provides funding so that its domestic violence shelters and all levels of children's residential services can purchase alternate energy sources, e.g., generators, allowing these populations to "shelter in place" versus evacuate to a mass care shelter. If this is not possible, the Department must approve relocation to a hotel or corporate office. DCF will work in conjunction with any established non-congregate care hotel programs in order to keep particularly at-risk citizens out of mass care shelters. However, if the size, nature or location of an event is significant enough that any residential facility cannot continue to serve the children residing there on site, the facility caregiver should immediately implement a use of alternate facility process. Alternate facility process for residential services can include the following courses of action:

- Use of emergency shelters,
- Use of an alternate site vacancy within the same agency,
- Use of an alternate site vacancy outside of the current agency,
- Use of a DCF approved family or relative caregiver,
- Resource family relocation,
- Use of alternate resource family, or
- Temporary, emergency hotel residence.

The Department will seek to provide support services should the use of emergency shelter be the only available alternative to residential services for any child or family receiving services from the DCF as appropriate and available for the duration of the event or until alternate residential accommodations can be provided. For children receiving DCF-funded residential services outside the state disaster response, if needed, will be provided through the national Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).

Residential Services – Agency Providers. Disaster preparedness, response and recovery for agency-operated residential programs that are licensed, contracted and/or funded by DCF will be provided as outlined in the agency-wide emergency response plan and agency site specific emergency response plans. This will be executed in cooperation with DCF and county and local emergency response entities, per contract requirements.

Children's System of Care Services. DCF recognizes the critical need for the ongoing provision of behavioral health, substance use and intellectual and developmental disability services to children and youth. Services provided to individuals under the auspices of CSOC are provided by

contracted providers, and the need for plans to ensure the continuity of those services will be included in associated contracts and memoranda of agreement. The state's contracted system administrator will ensure that systems are in place to allow for the preservation of records and continuation of payment to service providers.

Sexual Assault Services and Domestic Violence Shelters and Services. The occurrence of a declared disaster does not eliminate the need for domestic violence shelters or services, or sexual assault services provided through DCF's DOW. Contracted providers and grant recipients will ensure that continuity of operations and relocation plans are in place.

Family and Community Partnerships Services. Services provided under the umbrella of FCP are provided by contracted providers. In the event of a statewide or local emergency, each provider must adhere to emergency closing requirements as specified in their operational procedures, contracts and/or memorandums of agreement. Emergency closing requirements include notifying appropriate DCF staff, notification to constituents, and a means e.g., answering machine/service to communicate important information regarding emergency related closings to the community. Family Success Centers (FSCs) are one of the many programs provided through FCP, and in case of a declared emergency, services provided through DCF's network of 57 county-based FSCs are critical, as they provide services and collaborate with families, local governments, and community entities to serve their communities. Each FSC is uniquely designed by local parents to support and understand the needs of the community in which it is located. As such they are uniquely positioned to gather information related to community dynamics, including inequities. These contracted providers will ensure continuity of operations plans are in place to help support for all disaster survivors and to identify and address disparate outcomes that may be experienced families marginalized racial backgrounds and communities, including the LGBTQIA2S+ population. FSCs must provide DCF with an alternate contact for the Program Director and the ability to contact the executive director or chief program official at a cellular number during a statewide or local emergency.

Education Services. DCF's OOE provides intensive 12-month educational services to children, youth and young adults ages three through 21. These services are provided through 13 DCF regional schools, three contracted programs and four hospital-based satellite programs. Disaster preparedness, response and recovery will be provided based upon the Manual of Regional School Safety Plans and the individual school safety plan developed at each campus. All related activities will be conducted in cooperation with DCF-OEM and county and local emergency response entities.

Each regional school, as part of preparedness and planning, will identify a school safety team and identify an alternate location to their students in the event of a short-term event that requires the use of an alternate facility process. Incidents that result in a facility being unavailable for use for any extended period will require the implementation of alternate facility process. Alternate facility process for the OOE can include the following:

- Use of an alternate OOE facility,
- Use of a local school district building based upon memorandum of understanding, or
- Use of an alternate private facility based upon lease agreement.

OOE maintains a fleet of vehicles, including school buses, a portion of which are parked at various OOE campuses. OOE employs a staff of part-time CDL drivers at each campus. Utilization of this transportation resource for disaster response will be as indicated in the transportation service portion of this plan.

Human Resource Services. DCF's Office of Human Resources (OHR) is an important provider of essential services in all areas of disaster preparedness, response and recovery. The maintenance of an experienced, trained, and informed workforce is a key component of DCF's level of preparedness. Provisions for the hiring of new employees and the training of all employees in the event of a disaster will be as designated in OHR policy and procedure. Timekeeping and payroll services will be continued consistent with OHR policy and procedure. OHR will work cooperatively with the New Jersey Civil Service Commission and New Jersey Department of the Treasury in pursuit of these goals. OHR will partner with the DCF-OEM and DCF's Office of Communications to provide for accurate and timely workforce notification relative to any disaster., OHR will coordinate with the DCF-OEM and designated employee bargaining units to develop any memorandums of understanding, side letters of agreement or concessions required by the establishment of alternate work sites, work rules or flexible and extended work hours necessitated by any event or occurrence.

DCF-OEM, and DCF's OHR, and Office of Training and Professional Development have cooperated in the development and implementation of a disaster protection, preparedness, response, recovery and mitigation curriculum. This curriculum includes elements of the NIMS, ICS, and other information critical to and current in the field of emergency management. DCF-OEM will identify, coordinate and track the completion of all federal and state required disaster preparedness training for those employees designated.

DCF-OEM will provide information and otherwise encourage the personal preparation of all DCF employees for disaster or disaster related situations. DCF-OEM recognizes the reality that a personally prepared workforce will be better equipped to assist in DCF's response to any disaster if they themselves and those close to them are prepared. In that regard, DCF has developed and implemented policy, procedures and staff outreach that will assist in the maintenance of a "disaster ready" workforce.

Office of Emergency Management Services. DCF-OEM, under the supervision and direction of the DCF Director of Facilities, will serve in the role of DCF liaison to OHSP, NJ OEM, Domestic Security Preparedness Task Force, Domestic Security Preparedness Planning Group, New Jersey Group for Access and Integration Needs in Emergencies and Disasters (NJGAINED), State Led Housing Task Force, Sheltering Task Force, FEMA, federal Health and Human Services – Agency for Children and Families, and to all other state departments and county, local and agency offices of emergency management. DCF-OEM will assume this role for the purpose of assisting in guiding protection, preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation activities and resources relative to the provision of all child protection and child welfare services either locally or on a statewide basis. DCF-OEM is responsible for DCF disaster plan development, implementation, training, and revision. It will participate in regular drills and exercises of various type and size to ensure an appropriate level of readiness. DCF-OEM works in conjunction with DCF's security advisors to conduct and evaluate drills and exercises for DCF offices.

Administration, Logistics and Legal. Any and all agreements and understandings entered into for the purchase, lease or other use of equipment and/or services will be in accordance with the provisions of state law. DCF will establish and adhere to established administrative controls to manage expenditure of funds relative to disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Accountability and justification for all disaster related expenditures will be provided by the Department. DCF will timely submit required documentation in accordance with established federal program guidelines to obtain federal reimbursement when available.

DCF will adhere to all federal, state and department specific reporting guidelines and requirements in the event of any disaster. Back up and preservation of essential program (client) records and case files is provided for in NJSPIRIT.

IT is critical to DCF's operations. Critical information systems must be maintained and backed up. Information includes files, documents, computer software and databases required to carry out mission essential functions. IT shall provide the capability to back-up and restore both file and application servers in the event of an emergency. DCF employs secured, offsite storage of all back-up tapes and utilizes the New Jersey Office of IT hub facility for NJSPIRIT. In the event of total destruction or loss of access to the 50 East State Street building, key personnel could be provided remote access to the server and technical support. Phone equipment and back-up tapes are located at 50 East State Street, Trenton, New Jersey.

Plan Development and Maintenance. DCF-OEM, as directed by the Director of Facilities, has the overall responsibility for planning and managing its resources as necessary to assure emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Each functional component of DCF shares in the responsibility to develop and maintain appropriate planning documents that address responsibilities assigned in the department plan. The Department's functional components have the responsibility to maintain unit, facility or site-specific plans annexed to the DCF Disaster Plan. This may include standard operating procedures, notification lists, and resource data that ensure a prompt and effective response to emergencies.

DCF-OEM will coordinate a bi-annual review of the DCF Disaster Plan with functional component representatives of DCF. DCF-OEM will oversee all review and revision efforts to assure appropriate updates based upon lessons learned during actual occurrences and exercises, and other changes in organization, technology, responsibility and/or capability. The DCF Disaster Plan will be maintained and updated by DCF-OEM as required. Functional components within DCF may recommend changes and will provide information relative to capability changes and/or emerging needs that may impact their emergency management responsibilities.

DCF-OEM will recommend and issue changes to the DCF Disaster Plan as authorized by DCF's Commissioner, Chief of Staff, and the Deputy Commissioner of Administration. DCF-OEM will assure appropriate distribution of the DCF Disaster Plan and its functional annexes within DCF and to other state departments and agencies as appropriate and as recommended by the NJSP OEM.

DCF-OEM will ensure participation in any relevant exercises by one or all functional components of the DCF at least annually. DCF-OEM and other DCF divisions will also participate in statewide exercises in emergency response as requested by the NJSP OEM as required. DCF-OEM and DCF security advisors will continue the planning and roll-out of lockdown drills, exercises, and post-event evaluations for DCF staff.

DCF Direction and Control. In keeping with the assumption that emergency response to all incidents is typically best managed at the lowest jurisdictional, organizational, or geographic level, DCF will most often serve in a support role relative to the state's overall ESF-oriented disaster response, excluding DCF's mandated unique mission essential functions. It is only in those incidents that are exclusive to DCF that DCF-OEM will take the lead in management of the response.

During most emergency operations, federal, state, county and local emergency responders will remain, to the extent possible, under the established management and supervisory control of their parent organizations. Key officials with the responsibility for executing direction and control of multi-agency response and recovery operations within defined areas are identified in local, county and state plans. The coordination of services and sharing of information with other states, as needed, will be coordinated through OEM at the SEOC.

DCF will implement plans to maintain essential functions relative to the well-being of New Jersey's children, youth and families including child protection and welfare services for the entire state and will coordinate otherwise with the NJSP OEM in support of their response to all incidents requiring the activation of the SEOC.

Notification and Activation. DCF-OEM is responsible for all DCF emergency notifications and the activation of the DCF Disaster Plan. Information relative to staff reporting requirements, work location availability and alternate work locations and hours will be messaged via text, e-mail alerts and/or the 1-855-653-2336 employee hotline. Use of established phone trees or chains of communication where available and established in operational or geographically defined work units is encouraged.

Resource Management. The goal of effective resource management is to ensure that DCF has the organizational structure and processes to locate, obtain and distribute necessary resources in the event of an emergency. DCF resources include personnel, professional expertise, facilities, communications equipment, computer hardware and software, training curriculums and facilities, and vehicles. An emergency alert notification contact roster for DCF executive management will be maintained by DCF-OEM. If new equipment is required, DCF will request deployment of emergency equipment from our regular vendors or via the SEOC via EMMIT request. Access to resources from out of state or provision of resources for an out of state incident will be as defined in the EMAC or through FEMA via the FEMA Integration Team located at the SEOC.

Communications. To the extent permitted by the incident, communications within DCF will continue to utilize existing and operational land line telephones, mobile/cell phones, smart phones, personal or department issued laptop computers. Use of these devices will be contingent on the availability of current network services. DCF-OEM issued GETS/WPS cards to all senior executives and their backups for their use in a telecommunications-impacted incident.

DCF-OEM established a DCF emergency radio communications system connecting all DCF worksites by the assignment of portable 800Mhz Motorola radios to each site. The system is tested monthly and is activated in part or in whole when the ability to communicate or to communicate safely via other means is no longer available. The system is an interoperable system, which is monitored by the NJSP and the New Jersey Human Services Police Department.

Public Information. Through the Office of the Governor and NJ OEM, DCF will coordinate all disaster-related information released to the public, including the communication of child welfare services available to families in disaster-impacted areas. For disasters requiring SEOC activation, information disclosures to the public will be the responsibility of a state-managed joint information center. If a joint information center is activated by the SEOC, DCF's Office of Communications will serve as the DCF liaison to that entity as noted in ESF #15.

Transportation. DCF maintains a fleet of vehicles. Most of these vehicles are used to transport children served by CP&P. DCF-OOE utilizes buses to transport children to and from the various

regional OOE schools and other educational programs. The remaining vehicles in the fleet are assigned to units supporting DCF field offices.

DCF recognizes that particular attention must be given to individuals that lack the capacity to provide or otherwise arrange transportation for themselves and for children in their care. In response to this need, DCF may look to utilize the fleet of vehicles it maintains in the most efficient and equitable fashion in response to any event that calls for the movement of children under DCF supervision and to assure continued provision of child protection and child welfare services throughout the state.

Facility, local, county, or regional events may require the emergency reallocation of a portion of the DCF fleet to or from an affected area depending upon the nature of the incident. For example, flooding of a particular area may require that a portion of the fleet be relocated to higher ground. A disaster requiring activation of the State Emergency Operations Plan may require the reallocation of the DCF fleet or portions of it to the NJSP Office of Emergency Management.

Evacuation. DCF-OEM will ensure that all DCF operated facilities and programs have plans in place to safely evacuate staff and children from disaster affected areas to non-affected areas as a component of their facility/home disaster plan. Each DCF office location will have an emergency action plan and incorporated in the plans will also be provisions for designated alternate sites and identification of muster points. Plans will also address the need for the continuation of services at alternate sites. As described above, caregivers are expected to contact DCF with information relative to the location to which they have relocated at the earliest possible date. Exclusive of emergency facility evacuation for a fire or other reason (drill or otherwise), activation of evacuation plans will be triggered upon request or direction from local, county, state, or FEMA authorities. Staff will receive instructions and trainings regarding the evacuation process.

Health and Medical. DCF works collaboratively with NJ OEM and DOH to improve DCF's preparedness as it pertains to health and medical services, including mental health. DCF caseworkers and other staff will seek to provide support to those individuals under their care and supervision at a local level and through the existing network of health care professionals in the community. The Department will continue to access the services provided by the comprehensive health evaluations for children exam sites that were not impacted or impeded by the event and/or utilize existing emergency protocols for critical care via public health and hospital infrastructure. In the event of a declaration of a state or federal disaster, DCF will seek to provide medical and health related services to those individuals under its care and supervision at the direction of the NJ OEM and/or the DOH.

For DCF staff, the Department has a confidential peer-to-peer counseling support service, Worker2Worker, that is coordinated by Rutgers University, University Behavioral Health Care. DCF's Office of Staff Health and Wellness provides Daily Wellness messages and a DCF Real Talk series for relevant issues impacting emotional health. DCF has also procured and distributed First Aid Kits and Bleeding Control Kits for all offices. DCF continues to partner with state treasury for acquisition and maintenance of automated external defibrillators for designated offices.

Mass Care. Mass care consists of all activities to provide for the basic needs of people displaced by a disaster, including shelter, food, reunification services, first aid, and other emergency relief supplies. DCF-OEM will implement procedures for providing or requesting mass care for personnel and children impacted by a disaster or emergency. Any event impacting a large area of the state and requiring the movement of large numbers of children under the care and

supervision of the DCF will see implementation of the alternate facility process discussed in the residential services portion of this plan. DCF is also a participant in the NJGAINED, which is the state disaster housing task force and repatriation team.

Continuity of Operations. The occurrence of a disaster of any size could impede DCF's ability to provide essential services to the children, youth and families in a portion of or the entire state. In response to this potentiality, DCF-OEM works with the various DCF organizational units and agencies in the development and maintenance of the Department's COOP and Continuity of Government (COG) plan. DCF has outlined orders of succession and delegations of authority for DCF divisions. There are also DCF school safety plans, CP&P emergency preparedness and response plans and office emergency action plans on file in DCF-OEM. Lines of succession and delegations of authority for agencies or facilities licensed by, contracted with or funded by DCF must be defined in unit, facility, site or agency specific plans. Emergency action steps and the alternate facility process are delineated in organization and assignment of responsibilities specifically in the various essential services sections. The COOP and COG plans, as well as a Pandemic Annex, provide guidance in ensuring the execution of mission essential functions critical to the safety and well-being of children, youth, families and communities. All plans and guidance documents are intended to be used as a framework for operations and may be revised/updated as needed before, during and after an event.

Glossary of Terms

All Hazards – Anything that is potentially dangerous or harmful and often the root cause of an unwanted outcome.

Recovery – The development, coordination and execution of service and site restoration plans for impacted entities and the reconstitution of operations and services. Identify needs and resources, promote restoration of normal operations, incorporate mitigation measures, identify lessons learned and promote resiliency.

Response – All activities that address the short-term direct effects of an incident. Activities can occur immediately before, during or directly after an emergency or disaster. Includes the execution of emergency operation plans to minimize unfavorable outcomes.

Catastrophic incident – Any natural or man-made incident including terrorism, that results in extraordinary levels of mass casualties, damage or disruption severely affecting the infrastructure and operational functions.

Critical infrastructure – Vital systems and assets that the destruction or incapacity of such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact of functional operations and service provision.

Evacuation – An organized, supervised dispersal or removal of personnel and children/families from potentially dangerous areas and their reception and care to safe areas.

Hazard mitigation – Actions and activities directed toward eliminating or reducing the risk of disaster occurrence.

Incident – An occurrence or event, natural or man-made that requires an emergency response to protect life or property.

Interoperable communications – The ability of emergency responders to talk to one another via radio and other communication systems and exchange voice/and or data with one another on demand and in real time.