



NC DEPARTMENT OF **HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES**

Division of Social Services
Child Welfare Services

**North Carolina Disaster Plan
2025-2029**

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1 Introduction

When a disaster event occurs, there is little or no time to prepare personnel and resources to respond well. A disaster plan has the goals of readying an organization for sudden activity, lessening the impact on the most vulnerable populations, and reducing waste of resources, time, and effort.¹

All states are required to develop and submit a state-level disaster plan to the federal government.² The structure of social services in North Carolina is a county-administered, state-supervised system. As a result, it is critical that state and county agencies develop plans that spell out how they will coordinate and share information about economic and child welfare needs during a disaster event.

Because North Carolina is state-supervised and county-administered, most incidents begin and end locally and are managed at the local level. The county-wide disaster plan is usually developed by the county Emergency Preparedness Department, which includes all county departments, including social services. The county-wide disaster plan details how counties will mitigate risk and plan for response and recovery. The state-required county child welfare plan is usually a part of this larger county emergency preparedness document. The purpose of the county child welfare plan is to clarify requirements and methods of communication in the area of child welfare when a disaster occurs.

Chapter 166A of the North Carolina General Statutes establishes the authority and responsibilities of the Governor. The Governor delegates authority to the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety who will serve as the State Coordinating Officer (SCO) and will be responsible for direction and control of state operations. The Secretary of the Department of Public Safety delegates authority to the NC Emergency Management (NCEM) Director who is granted the responsibility and authority to respond to emergencies and disasters. The North Carolina Emergency Operations Plan (NCEOP) establishes responsibilities for state departments, private volunteer organizations, and private nonprofit organizations that make up the State Emergency Response Team (SERT). The NCEOP incorporates a functional approach that groups the types of assistance to be provided under NC Emergency Support Functions (NCESF) and responsibilities assigned to SERT sections for addressing needs at the state and county levels. Each function is assigned a lead state agency selected based on that agency's authorities, resources, and capabilities in a particular functional area. Additionally, each function is assigned to the

¹ Ferry, A. (10/19/2017). The importance of being prepared before a disaster strikes. Galaxy-digital. <https://medium.com/galaxy-digital/the-importance-of-being-prepared-before-a-disaster-strikes-75c55b69267>

² Child & Family Services Improvement Act, P.L. 109-288

NCEM Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR), which coordinates interaction between primary and support agencies and the federal, state, and local emergency management structure. A corresponding federal Emergency Support Function (ESF) is also identified for each functional area. State assistance will be provided under the overall coordination of the SERT Leader, acting for NCEM, Department of Public Safety, on behalf of the Governor.

In North Carolina, an Area Command is established (1) to oversee the management of multiple incidents that are each being handled by an organization or (2) to oversee the management of large or multiple incidents to which several Incident Management Teams have been assigned. Area Command has the responsibility to set overall strategy and priorities, allocate critical resources according to priorities, ensure incidents are properly managed, and ensure objectives are met and strategies followed. Area Command becomes Unified Area Command when incidents are multijurisdictional.

The NCEOP establishes a comprehensive framework of policy and guidance for state and local disaster preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation operations.³ The plan details capabilities, authorities, and responsibilities. It establishes mutual understanding among federal, state, local, and other public and private nonprofit organizations. The NCEOP describes a system for effective use of federal, state, and local government resources as well as private sector resources necessary to preserve the health, safety, and welfare of persons affected during various emergencies.

Through the above operations plan, NC DSS works closely with public and private partners through its statewide planning and response under the leadership of Emergency Management.

The Mass Care section of the NCEOP encompasses how the state engages community partners who provide services to diverse populations (i.e., immigrants, members of the LGBTQ+ community, persons with disabilities, and veterans). In addition, the Recovery Individual Assistance section of the EOP incorporates participation of disaster survivors in the provision of case management of services. Individuals who experienced disasters are hired to aid in the provision of those services after a disaster has occurred.

NCEOP has a standard operations plan for providing translation, interpreting, and assistive technology tools, including the ADA-compliant emergency alert notification system (provided in 15 different languages). All media releases are communicated in English and Spanish and posted online so Google Translate can be utilized. These posts also meet ADA compliance.

The NCDSS Child Welfare Section has identified staff who serve as members of the Safety Emergency Response Team (SERT) and therefore provide direct input into the identified

³ NC Department of Public Safety, Division of Emergency Management, Emergency Operation Plan (EOP)

community needs and the coordination of resources such as housing, behavioral health, education, and food supports. NCDSS also specifically provides expertise on family reunification service provision. These staff have a liaison role within this framework to ensure all individuals identified with disaster-related needs are served.

According to the Census Bureau's community resilience modeling, counties with higher levels of income inequality tend to have a higher share of individuals who are socially vulnerable to disasters. Additionally, children and their families involved with the child welfare system may be more vulnerable due to a variety of factors impacting their lives. North Carolina's Child Welfare Disaster Plan includes the following to ensure accessibility to services for families and children after a disaster:

- The child welfare plan specifically ensures that all families known to local agencies will be checked on and connected to services.
- Trauma from the storm can add to any prior trauma the child or family has experienced. Tools are provided in North Carolina's toolbox for child welfare workers related to traumatic stress and common stress reactions experienced by children, as well as information on how young children heal after a crisis.
- Other tools in the toolbox include assessing current needs, electronic resources to manage stress, and information to provide families on Disaster Assistance.

Counties are required to submit a summary of their child welfare disaster plan to NCDSS using the template "Summary of County Child Welfare Disaster Plan," which can be found on the NCDSS [Disaster Preparedness Resources](#) web page. Tools to aid counties in providing services in a disaster can also be found using this link to the webpage. Counties are required to submit summaries annually to their [Regional Child Welfare Specialist](#).

2 Types of Disasters

Although most disasters declared in North Carolina are weather-based (e.g., hurricane, flood, snow and ice, wildfire, landslide), the state has had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and several counties have experienced civil unrest and/or cyberattacks. Thus, plans for disaster mitigation, response, and recovery need to expand to consider new threats to the ability of local child welfare agencies to provide services and to maintain communication when usual means are unavailable.

The North Carolina Disaster Recovery Framework (2018), developed by the North Carolina Emergency Management Plan, states that after a State Emergency or Disaster Declaration is made and damage assessments have been conducted by local child welfare agency and state emergency management staff, the Governor will issue a proclamation that defines the disaster area and declares it as a Type 1, 2, or 3 Disaster.

- Type 1 disasters are smaller and more localized, such as a tornado or isolated flooding. The state can respond to the emergency and recover without federal financial or physical assistance.
- Type 2 disasters cause more damage to a larger area, such as a hurricane or ice storm that impacts several counties. Federal assistance is required to recover from the disaster. However, the state must request financial assistance from FEMA and submit damage assessments that meet the financial threshold.
- Type 3 disasters devastate a widespread area and cause catastrophic damage, such as a major hurricane. Again, federal assistance is required to recover from the disaster. The state must request financial assistance from FEMA and submit damage assessments that meet the financial threshold.

The level of response is affected by the type of disaster the Governor declares.

3 Statewide Disaster Plan for NCDSS

Once a disaster declaration is made, public and private child welfare agencies will work together, using their disaster plans, to coordinate with local agencies, partners, and the state to ensure that regular operations continue. Components of a child welfare disaster plan pertain to efforts on both the local and state levels. The child welfare plan should include the following five target areas:

1. Identification, location, and continued availability of services for children under the supervision of NC child welfare agencies during a disaster.
2. Response to new cases during a disaster.
3. Ability to remain in communication with essential child welfare personnel during a disaster.
4. Plans to preserve essential program records during a disaster.
5. Ability to coordinate services and share information with other states during a disaster.

Guidance for meeting these requirements follows.

3.1 Identification, Location, and Continued Availability of Services

Identification, location, and continued availability of services procedures for children under the supervision of or in the custody of North Carolina child welfare agencies, including non-minor dependents, children residing in foster care, children in out-of-county

placements, children served by the Interstate Compact of the Placement of Children, and out-of-state non-minor dependents who may be displaced.

Table 1. Responsible Parties and Processes and Procedures Guidance for Identification, Location, and Continued Availability of Services

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
<p>Local Child Welfare Agencies (Local Child Welfare Agency with Other Human Services Agencies that Provide Child Welfare Services)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To ensure all local child welfare agency staff have a working knowledge of the purpose and content of the local child welfare agency’s disaster plan, the agency director/designee will arrange for meetings at least annually to disseminate information regarding the requirements and processes of the plan. Appropriate staff should be involved in a tabletop exercise to go over disaster response. 2. Local child welfare agencies are required to maintain essential operations during a disaster. At the time of a disaster event, typical channels of communication and the ability to locate staff quickly are frequently affected. To mitigate confusion and to maintain service delivery, local child welfare agency staff are encouraged to complete disaster plans for themselves/their family before any event is imminent. Family disaster plans contain information necessary for the agency to locate and communicate with staff. The agency is encouraged to develop and maintain a list of staff who have completed their own family disaster plan, with important contact numbers and special needs of the family. Staff plans for themselves/their families should be updated annually. 3. Depending on the extent and outcome of the disaster, the local child welfare agency will continue business with regular operations maintained and all job functions covered. In the event staff are unable to report to work or must report to alternative work locations, they will comply with the agency’s disaster policy. 4. If it is not possible to maintain all services due to the impact of the disaster in certain locations, ongoing non-essential services may be postponed as needed until normal business operations can be restored. If some offices are inaccessible or closed, the local child welfare agency director will designate an open office as the central point for coordination of assignment and workload activities. Modifications to service delivery must be communicated to the NCDSS child welfare director/designee.

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
	<p>5. If at any time a local child welfare agency is not able to effectively discharge any or all its duty for child protection (including intake, assessment, in-home services, permanency planning, and adoptions as defined in NCGS 108A) consequent to a disaster, the local child welfare agency director/designee must inform their NCDSS Regional Child Welfare Specialist.</p> <p>6. Local child welfare agencies, private child-placing agencies, and residential childcare facilities will provide information and instruction to foster home providers, relatives, group homes, etc. to assist with evacuation and relocation as they are needed during an impending disaster or an emergency. These contacts will be tracked so the local child welfare agency can provide information to NCDSS.</p> <p>7. All caregivers/resource families will have on file a home disaster plan which identifies alternative locations in the event of evacuation. Included in the home disaster plan is a telephone number identified for foster parents, who are to call to check in with their respective child welfare agency as soon as possible after a disaster. Home disaster plans must be updated annually and shared with supervising agencies.</p> <p>8. In anticipation of impending disaster and/or evacuation, child welfare workers/supervisors will identify children and families in active caseloads using NC FAST, Central Registry, and the Child Placement and Payment System (CPPS). Child welfare workers/supervisors will print a list of current contact information of families' anticipated evacuation locations.</p> <p>9. During the disaster period, all child welfare workers will contact caregivers, foster, and kinship families on their caseloads via telephone and/or home visits to identify and locate children who are displaced as a result of the disaster, to assess and address client needs.</p> <p>10. During disasters, counties may have challenges accessing information technology systems used to conduct daily business. As part of disaster preparedness activities, counties must consider the types of information that can be printed for use during the disaster period. The local child welfare agency will identify a method to ensure it has a list of all open cases when there is a threat of a disaster or in case of power outage.</p>

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
	<p>11. Providing emergency response and essential services will be top priority in the event of a disaster. Priority will be given to reunification of children who have been separated from their caretaker because of the disaster. Reunification efforts will be initiated as soon as possible after the disaster. Reunification services will be managed by the local child welfare agency in conjunction with the American Red Cross and other local partners.</p> <p>12. In the event of a pandemic, child welfare workers are to wear masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) as necessary and available during required home visits. Any video-based meetings or visits will be documented with explanations as to why they were carried out in this manner.</p> <p>13. In disasters which disrupt court schedules, child welfare agencies have an obligation to ascertain the status of youth in court jurisdiction or youth and young adults receiving foster care services that may be affected due to closures of college campuses or disruption to other placement situations.</p> <p>14. Local child welfare agencies will use NC FAST as the primary source of information regarding children, families, and placement home providers. Agencies not yet enrolled in NC FAST for child welfare will use the CPPS and local electronic systems to gather information on children and their placement with licensed providers, when there has been no disruption in power/internet. (For more on accessing and preserving records, see section 3.4.)</p> <p>15. Child welfare workers/supervisors will maintain daily contact with any foster care facilities that must evacuate or are no longer viable to maintain placement locations, and will monitor the status of all residing children, until the children can return or have another designated placement.</p> <p>16. Local child welfare staff will work with the county sheriff, local police departments, and fire departments to assist them in their efforts to locate the most medically fragile children, foster children, or foster families in need. Shelters provided by the local child welfare agency and the American Red Cross will be utilized.</p> <p>17. Child welfare services will operate following state regulations and agency policies and procedures surrounding intakes and emergency response investigations. Assessments will be conducted on each new intake and Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools will be</p>

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
	<p>utilized to determine whether the child(ren) can remain in the care of their parents or caregivers. If removal is imminent, arrangements will be made for the child’s entrance into an emergency foster care placement.</p> <p>18. The local child welfare agency director/designee will work with neighboring counties to identify placement resources that can assist in a disaster.</p> <p>19. Parents of children in agency custody or in the placement authority of a local child welfare agency will be notified by the child’s caseworker, or designee, of the child’s status and location, if appropriate to do so. This includes children living in another state.</p> <p>20. Child welfare workers will provide foster children, upon request, information on the safety and well-being of birth parents and other family members who may have been affected by the disaster, and vice versa.</p> <p>21. Using the file County Report on Foster Children and ICPC Status.xlsx, local child welfare agencies will provide a daily report to NCDSS on all displaced children and families served in child welfare, including those governed by ICPC regulations, by maintaining daily contact with this population, tracking placements, tracking barriers to returning to designated placements, and providing resources and referrals as needs are identified.</p> <p>22. If a child is found to be deceased in the aftermath of a disaster, scientific or positive identification should be made by a coroner or medical examiner prior to the notification of next of kin or before the body is released to a person authorized to direct the disposition of remains. Local child welfare agencies must notify NCDSS of any children they have an open case on who died during a disaster.</p> <p>23. In cases involving the death of a child, every effort should be made to include grief counselors and mental health support services for the primary caregivers and siblings of the deceased. The notification team may additionally include a representative of the medical examiner or coroner, a member of the clergy, and possibly a medical professional. Law enforcement may also assist.</p> <p>24. Coordination will be made with mental health crisis teams if a parental contact includes notice of a death of a child.</p>

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
<p>NCDSS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCDSS will annually ensure North Carolina is prepared for any disaster. 2. Depending on the extent and outcome of the disaster, NCDSS will continue business with regular operations maintained and all job functions covered. If staff are unable to report to work or must report to alternative work locations, NCDSS will adhere to North Carolina Office of State Human Resources policy. 3. If NCDSS is unable to remain in operation after the disaster, it will follow the Business Continuity of Operations Plan (BCOOP). Local child welfare agencies will follow their BCOOP. 4. NCDSS maintains several automated systems for providing historical and statistical data during the provision of child welfare services. Information from these systems will be accessible to counties upon request, should their paper or computer systems be destroyed. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4.1 The Central Registry for Child Abuse and Neglect and fatalities data would be able to provide historical data on families that have received services and the specific details surrounding their involvement with CPS and CPS In-Home services. 4.2 The Daily Report of Services System and the Services Information System would be able to provide counties a listing of children that may be involved with CPS but who were not yet determined to be abused or neglected and identified to the Central Registry by name, and by the individual child welfare worker's name. 4.3 NCDSS also maintains foster home licensure information in the Foster Care Facility Licensing System, which may assist local child welfare agencies if they lose access to either their computer or paper records of foster parent information. 4.4 Placement information on each child is maintained in the CPPS and the Records Management System. Should a disaster occur, these data sources could assist counties in locating and maintaining contact with foster children for whom they are responsible and with the foster parents and other caregivers that provide care for these children. 5. NCDSS also maintains automated systems that maintain current and historical employment activity (EPIS), cash benefits, and special

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
	<p>assistance benefits (EIS) data that would be made available to counties in the event of a disaster.</p> <p>6. NCDSS maintains a list of facilities that can assist with providing placements and services for those displaced.</p> <p>7. NCDSS will maintain contact with its contractors who provide services, including family preservation and post-adoption services, to ensure services are not interrupted or are continued as soon as possible.</p> <p>8. As the foster care licensing authority, NCDSS confirms and approves evacuation plans for foster care facilities.</p> <p>9. Regional Child Welfare Specialists will request a status report, within 24 hours of the disaster onset, of identified children in DSS custody or in a placement in their county, who may be impacted by the disaster.</p> <p>10. Regional Child Welfare Specialists will respond to individual local child welfare agency needs, as identified, through consultation and technical assistance.</p> <p>11. The NCDSS licensing team will work with local child welfare agencies to distribute a listing of potential placement homes to local child welfare agency directors in affected areas, if an automated listing is not available.</p> <p>12. The NCDSS regulatory team, working with local child welfare agencies, will compile information on all licensed facilities that had to evacuate, as well as the location and status of the children relocated.</p> <p>13. The Licensing and Regulatory Team of NCDSS will aid local child welfare agencies to secure placements for displaced children.</p> <p>14. NCDSS State Emergency Response Team (SERT) members will work with Public Health and the Office of the Medical Examiner to identify any child fatalities during a disaster. The NCDSS SERT member will report all child fatalities to the NCDSS Child Fatality Manager for documentation by the team and to be checked against child welfare data for any open cases served by local child welfare agencies.</p> <p>15. NCDSS will maintain communication with its federal and state partners according to the state and child welfare disaster plan.</p>

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
	<p>A record retention schedule will be followed in the event of an emergency disaster. The Information Technology Division (ITD) has implemented a separate complex disaster plan to safeguard the confidential information generated by local child welfare agencies.</p> <p>16. When local agencies are unable to provide child welfare services, NCDSS will work to identify resources and staff from counties that are not affected and are able to temporarily assist in the provision of services. NCDSS will also identify counties that can provide services where children and families are found to be staying while displaced.</p> <p>17. NCDSS will have annual meetings to acquaint staff with state disaster plan requirements. Regional Child Welfare Specialists will annually review local child welfare agency plans and ensure all necessary components have been satisfactorily addressed.</p> <p>18. Upon request, NCDSS Regional Child Welfare Specialists shall assist local child welfare agencies in developing a local disaster drill.</p> <p>19. To maintain essential communication and service provision, all NCDSS staff are encouraged to complete disaster plans for themselves/their families.</p>
<p>Both NCDSS and Local Child Welfare Agencies</p>	<p>20. Both NCDSS and local child welfare agencies will confirm that enough personnel (with background checks/fingerprints) are assigned to aid and facilitate the safety, identification, and reunification of unaccompanied minors in an expeditious manner.</p>

3.2 Respond to New Child Welfare Cases in Areas Adversely Affected by a Disaster

Table 2. Responsible Parties and Processes and Procedures Guidance for Responding to New Child Welfare Cases in Areas Adversely Affected by a Disaster

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
<p>Local Child Welfare Agencies</p> <p>(Local Child Welfare Agencies with Other Human Services Agencies that Provide Child Welfare Services)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If communication lines have not been disrupted, local child welfare agencies will continue to receive notifications of child abuse, neglect, and dependency. 2. If some offices are inaccessible or closed, the local child welfare agency director will designate an open office as a central point for coordination of assignment and workload activities. Modifications to service delivery must be communicated to the NCDSS child welfare director/designee. The local child welfare agency director may use social media to communicate this information to the public. 3. Manual tracking forms can be used to capture information until online systems are available. Local child welfare disaster plans will clarify what forms need to be printed prior to a disaster event, if possible. If the event is sudden, local child welfare agencies may ask for assistance from counties close by who have not been affected, or from NCDSS as needed. 4. If child welfare staff cannot physically reach a child in need, the local child welfare agency will notify the various law enforcement agencies, who will handle immediate calls requested by child welfare services. 5. Providing emergency response and essential services will be top priority in the event of a disaster. Local child welfare agency staff will evaluate each case assigned to provide necessary emergency services and to address abuse and neglect and cases resulting from the disaster. 6. Local child welfare agencies will continue to respond to immediate response referrals through their regular intake process, attending to children in the order of severity of emergency at hand. Ongoing non-emergency services may be postponed as needed until normal business operations can be restored. 7. Child welfare workers/supervisors will respond to the needs of unaccompanied minors. Unaccompanied minors include children separated from caregivers and/or children whose caregivers are

	<p>incapacitated and unable to perform basic parental functions (i.e., feed, clothes, shelter, and protect).</p> <p>8. Local child welfare workers, with NCDSS support, will arrange for secure sheltering, care of unaccompanied minors, and ensure the assessment and treatment of medical, mental, and behavioral health needs. Should unaccompanied minors be identified in shelters, child welfare workers will ensure shelters separate these minors from adults and have controlled access to minor-only areas to ensure safety. Non-emergency services may be postponed as needed until normal business operations can be restored.</p> <p>9. Child welfare workers/supervisors will respond to the needs of unaccompanied minors. Unaccompanied minors include children separated from caregivers and/or children whose caregivers are incapacitated and unable to perform basic parental functions (i.e., feed, clothe, shelter, and protect).</p> <p>10. Local child welfare workers, with NCDSS support, will arrange for secure sheltering, care of unaccompanied minors, and ensure the assessment and treatment of medical, mental, and behavioral health needs. Should unaccompanied minors be identified in shelters, child welfare workers will ensure shelters separate these minors from adults and have controlled access to minor-only areas to ensure safety.</p>
<p>NCDSS</p>	<p>1. If, at any time, a local child welfare agency or other child welfare provider is not able to effectively discharge all or any its duty for child protection, the NCDSS child welfare director, along with NCDSS staff, will work with the local child welfare agency to determine strategies and resource needs to continue the work of child protection in the affected area.</p> <p>2. NCDSS will designate staff to receive calls from local child welfare agencies who may be unable to perform essential functions, including responding to new reports of neglect, dependency, or abuse. NCDSS will identify and coordinate with counties to identify who is able to respond to reports and ensure that timely responses occur. NCDSS will also coordinate meeting other needs as identified.</p>

3.3 Remain in Communication with Child Welfare Workers and Other Essential Child Welfare Personnel

Table 3. Responsible Parties and Processes and Procedures Guidance for Remaining in Communication with Child Welfare Workers and Other Essential Child Welfare Personnel

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
<p>Local Child Welfare Agencies</p> <p>(Local Child Welfare Agencies with Other Human Services Agencies that Provide Child Welfare Services)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local child welfare agencies will update staff contact information annually and ensure it is available even during a power outage. 2. Local child welfare agencies will maintain lists of contact numbers for resource families, shelters, and families receiving in-home services. 3. At the time of a disaster, child welfare workers in the field are to follow the safest course of action and then call in their location to a predetermined access point at the earliest time possible. 4. Local child welfare agencies will remain in communication with staff who are displaced because of a disaster. Alternate means of communication that may be necessary during a disaster will be discussed prior to a disaster. 5. Each child welfare agency is strongly encouraged to consider how to respond to media requests during and after a disaster event. A media plan should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5.1 who will be the media contact person, 5.2 what information can be shared and what is confidential, 5.3 what child welfare workers should say if they are approached while in the field during a disaster event, and 5.4 how to effectively use social media to clarify misinformation and counter rumors, which are common during disaster events. 6. Local child welfare agencies will provide to NCDSS data on the number of foster children and/or families displaced, services provided, as well as the impact of the disaster on the physical location of their offices and records.

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
<p>NCDSS</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCDSS will ensure all staff contact information is kept up to date. This information will be shared with potentially affected counties prior to a disaster event. 2. NCDSS will initiate communication with counties anticipating a disaster activation by State Emergency Management. 3. During the disaster, as much as possible, regular statewide conference calls will be scheduled to ensure all child welfare agencies are prepared and able to reach caseworkers and other essential staff. 4. NCDSS licensing and regulatory staff will contact any group homes or facilities in impacted areas. 5. NCDSS licensing and regulatory staff will coordinate with other state personnel and local child welfare agency workers to assign a point of contact for child-placing agencies that have evacuated and to ascertain their status until their functioning becomes normal. 6. Once the state enters the recovery phase of a disaster, NCDSS will utilize Regional Child Welfare Specialists to contact impacted agencies to assess the status of agency functioning as well as the status of the local agency’s available staff. 7. NCDSS will utilize the information gained from the Licensing and Regulatory Team and Regional Child Welfare Specialists to assess the status of essential child welfare services in the impacted areas.

3.4 Preserve Essential Program Records

The Information Technology Division (ITD) has implemented a separate complex disaster plan to safeguard the confidential information generated by local child welfare agencies. During a disaster of such magnitude that it disables a local child welfare agency from accessing critical information, information from the automated tracking systems will be promulgated so that local child welfare agencies can locate and provide mandated services to ensure the safety, permanence, well-being, and self-sufficiency of the families and children they serve.

Table 4. Responsible Parties and Processes and Procedures Guidance for Preserving Essential Program Records

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
Local Child Welfare Agencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It is expected that local child welfare agencies will have a local business continuity plan (BCOOP) in place as part of their local child welfare agency disaster plan. Local child welfare agencies are to work with their IT section to handle local access issues to all state systems. 2. The local child welfare agency plan should include procedures for access to records when needed by child welfare workers and supervisors when power is out due to a disaster event or 3. cyberattack. 4. Local child welfare agency disaster plans should include steps to preserve paper records for locations prone to flooding, such as storing records off site and ensuring records are on highest floors.
NCDSS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NCDSS will coordinate with its IT Division to maintain NC FAST, CPPS, and Central Registry systems before, during, and following a disaster. 2. Staff will assist with record searches and update systems for counties where access is interrupted. 3. State systems, including NC FAST and CPPS, are backed up off site and are available via any internet connected computer. If the main system is unavailable, the systems will be routed to those backups.

3.5 Coordinate Services and Share Information with Other States

This information is intended to provide guidance to child welfare agencies for children served under the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC), in the event of a disaster.

Table 5. Responsible Parties and Processes and Procedures Guidance for Coordinating Services and Sharing Information with Other States

Responsible Party	Processes and Procedures Guidance
<p>Local Child Welfare Agencies</p> <p>(Local Child Welfare Agency with Other Human Services Agencies that Provide Child Welfare Services)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Local child welfare agencies will maintain contact with local, state, and national points of contact to collect, centrally maintain, and share, as appropriate, pertinent information regarding children and families receiving interstate services in cases of emergency. 2. Child welfare agencies will ensure the data submitted to NC FAST regarding children under ICPC is accurate, making it possible to identify and locate children quickly. 3. When there is an impending disaster, agencies will designate one point of contact who will be responsible for providing status updates on children to the NCDSS ICPC office. 4. Child welfare agencies will assess and monitor the safety of all children under ICPC who reside in a disaster area. This information will be documented in an Excel spreadsheet by each local child welfare worker, who will send it to the agency’s ICPC point of contact in an expeditious manner. 5. The agency ICPC contact will compile status updates of children into one file which will be shared with the NCDSS ICPC office within 48 hours after the onset of the disaster, and at least once per day thereafter. 6. If utilities (electricity, phone, internet) are impacted by the disaster, the status of the child will still be communicated to the NCDSS ICPC office. This can be done via a variety of channels (e.g., U.S. mail, email, fax). 7. For children under the supervision of the local child welfare agency, the child welfare worker will assess the needs of the child and will continue to provide available services to children who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Local child welfare agencies will notify the NCDSS ICPC office of suspended and resumed placement of children through ICPC in disaster affected areas. 9. All resource parents should develop a home disaster plan and share this plan with the local child welfare supervising agency, which will share it with the NCDSS ICPC office (if requested). 10. If a family relocates across state lines, local child welfare staff, the sending state’s ICPC office and the receiving state’s ICPC office will work together to ensure expedited approval of these moves, as well as services and supervision of these placements. 11. States receiving these children will be notified of the move, along with information about the child’s medical, behavioral, and educational history; safety and well-being needs; family history; case plan; information on visitation allowances and limitations; and contact information for siblings and other important persons to the child.
NCDSS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The NCDSS ICPC office will serve as a central point of contact in responding to status update requests of children from sending states. It will also be a central point of contact in communicating with national organizations that assist in locating children and reuniting families, such as the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. 2. The NCDSS ICPC office will also respond to requests for waivers, expedited placement requests, and flexibility in interpretation of federal requirements, based on the needs of children impacted by the disaster. 3. In the event of a disaster, the NCDSS ICPC office will contact NC FAST to obtain a list of children placed in North Carolina who live in the geographic area affected by the disaster; will provide this information to the local child welfare agency; and will request a status check on these children. 4. The NCDSS ICPC team will provide to the sending state a status report on the disaster or emergency and the status of the child. In the event the sending state’s assigned child welfare worker or agency cannot be reached, North Carolina’s ICPC liaison will contact the sending state’s ICPC administrator or designee. The response time to inform the sending state of the child’s status will depend on the volume of children involved in the disaster.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. If the NCDSS ICPC office is adversely impacted by the disaster, the office will designate a point of contact within NCDSS who will temporarily assume responsibility for emergency requests. NCDSS will communicate this information to local child welfare agencies and sending states in an expeditious manner.6. In the event a local child welfare agency is unable to continue to provide services to children in their custody due to being7. overwhelmed by a disaster or emergency, the NCDSS ICPC office8. will work with the affected counties and/or state emergency services to assist in the location of children in county custody located out-of-state. <p>When NC children are placed in another state and a disaster occurs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The NCDSS ICPC office will contact NC FAST to obtain a list of children placed in another state, and will share the names of these children, along with any applicable resources, to the receiving state's ICPC office.2. The receiving state's ICPC office will communicate with local North Carolina agencies regarding the status of the children as soon as possible.
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