

The 4 Cornerstones of Disaster Response for Organizations that Serve Children & Youth

Wildfire season is a common and worrisome time each year in the Western United States. For organizations that support children and youth, this list provides four helpful steps to take in the event of a fire or the threat of a fire in your community.

Please note, these are suggestions based on the experiences of individuals who served children and youth during and after a wildfire*. Follow disaster preparedness guidelines, listen to local authorities, and use your discretion as to the safety, timeliness, and appropriateness of the suggestions before implementing them in your own role and/or community.

1

Basic needs. First, contact the families that you serve to make sure they are safe and that their basic needs (food, water, shelter, medical needs) are being met. Find or create a list of local emergency shelters, food banks, and other resources (e.g., the 211 call service available in some communities) that can be shared with families.

2

Social and emotional support. Identify verified mental health services to support those you serve. Within your organization, learn about and implement trauma-informed practices to create a safe and supportive space for children and youth. Provide therapeutic activities, such as art, music, mindfulness activities, and yoga, to provide an outlet for processing feelings and/or sharing experiences.

Your services. Create a one-page document that highlights the services you provide, how you are responding to the needs of those you serve, and what kinds of donations and/or services would be helpful during this time. This document can be shared within and outside of the community.

Your network. Connect with other services and organizations, both within the community (e.g., schools, local Boys and Girls Club) and beyond (e.g., Red Cross). Working together will increase your capacity for serving children and youth and can help you keep your focus on the specific services you provide.

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*These suggestions come from a larger research study done in collaboration between Dr. Lindsey Nenadal at California State University, Chico and the Boys and Girls Clubs of the North Valley. In 2018, the Camp Fire swept through communities in Northern California, bringing massive destruction and devastation. During the fire and in the years since it happened, community members and leaders have worked hard to meet the various needs of local children and youth. They have been sharing their insights as a part of a study focused on gathering tips and strategies to share with other communities in need. The full results of this study will be ready to share at the end of 2021. If you have questions about this document or about the larger study, please contact Dr. Nenadal at lnenadal@csuchico.edu.