

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN

County & Agency Name: Merced County Human Services Agency

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This template is intended to be used as a guide to help counties incorporate the 2006 federal disaster response criteria as part of local child welfare plans. Minors in the probation system must also be included in the plan. County plans must be amended to include Child Welfare Services (CWS) Disaster Response Plans and be operational by September 28, 2007.

In September 2006, Congress passed the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law (PL) 109-288). PL 109-288 amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to reauthorize the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Among other changes, PL 109-288 established requirements for states on disaster planning in child welfare under Section 6 (a) (16). Accordingly, counties are requested to address the following program areas in developing local disaster readiness plans.

CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN

CWS Disaster Response Criteria A:	Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children under State care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster:
Essential Function:	1. Identification and location process of children who may be displaced
Process Description:	<p>CWS: The Staff Services Analyst will generate a monthly list of all children in placement utilizing a computer-generated report from Business Objects. The list will be maintained by the Deputy Director and accessed in the event of a disaster for contact information for each foster child. The Deputy Director and each of the Program Administrators also have secure remote access to the list.</p> <p>All CWS personnel with an assigned caseload will contact the children on their assigned caseloads</p>

	<p>via telephone and/or personal home visits. If the assigned social worker is not available, another social worker will make the contacts. Caseload coverage will be ensured by each supervisor, Program Administrator, or Deputy Director, in said order. Social Service Program Workers may be assigned to help contact all of the children.</p> <p>Probation:</p> <p>The Probation Department will prepare a list on a monthly basis of all wards in group homes or foster care with names of the group homes/foster agencies, addresses, phone numbers and two or more contact persons. This list will also include information about special medical or mental health needs of these wards, and the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the child's parent/guardian. This information will be e-mailed to and printed out by the Assistant Chief of Probation Services and the Assistant Chief of Custodial Services with the printed copies kept in their respective offices/facilities. The Assistant Chief of Custodial Services will ensure a copy is also maintained in the JJCC Control Room. In addition, the Deputy Probation Officers (DPOs) assigned to the Placement Unit and the Placement Unit supervisor will maintain a printed copy as well. Copies will be maintained in a secure and confidential manner, obsolete copies will be destroyed.</p> <p>In the event wards, whom are placed in a group home or foster home, become displaced or adversely affected by a disaster, the placement officer or other designated staff will contact each group home/foster home of those children affected. Contact can be made in person, by telephone, or with the assistance of allied agencies (e.g., local law enforcement, local probation services). The placement officer is to determine the safety and security status of each ward in their care.</p>
<p>Essential Function:</p>	<p>2. Communication process with child care providers</p>
<p>Process Description:</p>	<p>CWS:</p> <p>All CWS personnel with an assigned caseload will contact the care providers on their assigned caseloads via telephone and/or personal home visits. If the assigned social worker is not available, another social worker will make the contacts. Caseload coverage will be ensured by each supervisor, Program Administrator, or Deputy Director, in said order. Social Service Program Workers may be assigned to help contact all of the care providers.</p> <p>Probation:</p> <p>In the event wards who are placed in a group home or foster home become displaced or adversely affected by a disaster, the placement officer or other designated staff will contact each group home/foster home of those children affected. Contact can be made in person, by telephone, or with the assistance of allied agencies (e.g., local law enforcement, local probation services). The</p>

	placement officer is to determine the safety and security status of each ward in their care. If the Probation Department is satisfied that the safety and security of the child is not in jeopardy, the child will remain with the provider.
Essential Function:	3. Identification of evacuation procedures – Event known in advance
Process Description:	In addition to the County Emergency Plan maintained through County Administration, CWS and the Probation Department will continue to provide services as outlined in this document.
Essential Function:	4. Identification of evacuation procedures – Event not known in advance
Process Description:	In addition to the County Emergency Plan maintained through County Administration, CWS and the Probation Department will continue to provide services as outlined in this document.
Essential Function:	5. Identification of shelters
Process Description:	CWS: CWS personnel will be assigned to designated Red Cross shelters to assist with the intake and registration of any unaccompanied minors. Active efforts will be made to reunite minors with parents, guardians, responsible relatives, or other responsible caregivers.
	Probation: In the event wards are displaced from their assigned group home or foster home and cannot temporarily be returned to their parent/guardian or immediately laterally placed, the ward(s) will be housed at the Juvenile Justice Correctional Complex (JJCC) until they can be appropriately placed.
Essential Function:	6. Parental notification procedures
Process Description:	CWS: As soon as possible after ensuring the safety of all children in foster care, CWS personnel will make due diligent efforts to notify parents and/or legal guardians of the safety of his/her child, unless parental rights have been terminated.
	Probation: The placement officer will be responsible for contacting parents/guardians and advising of the circumstances and the status of their child.
Essential Function:	7. Alternative processes for providing continued services
Process Description:	CWS: CWS staff will ensure on-going emergency response and case management duties are fulfilled in accordance with current regulations and Agency policy.

Emergency Response

Intake Social Workers will continue to accept referrals during normal business hours as long as phone service is available. Emergency Response (ER) Social Workers will be assigned to investigate referrals. They will record preliminary information on the 24-91A and will enter all information into CWS/CMS as time allows or, in the event of a power outage, when the power is restored. In the event that cell phones are out, ER Workers will be assigned to report back to the agency by non-cellular phone or in person on a rotating 30 minute basis to check for immediate referrals. The ER supervisors will maintain a schedule of ER Worker reporting times. ER Workers must remain available by cell phones and pagers for as long as the services are available. Social Workers who detain will place the children or turn the children over to an assisting Social Worker for placement. In the event of a power outage, detaining Social Workers will be directed to a work site with electrical power to write petitions and detention reports.

Court

Court Social Workers will save the court reports they are working on to disk/CD and will be directed to begin working from the disk/CD. If the agency experiences a loss of power, the Court Workers will be directed to a location with a back-up power source to work on court reports.

Family Maintenance/Family Reunification

Family Maintenance and Family Reunification Social Workers will be asked to save any court reports they are working on to disk/CD and to begin working from the disk/CD. In the event of a power outage, social workers will work on court reports at the location with a back-up power source for all court dates within 10 working days. Each day the new 10-day parameter will apply. Social Workers who are not working on court reports are expected to be in the field contacting parents and children or monitoring visits. Notes will be recorded by hand and recorded in CWS/CMS when possible.

Home Assessment Team

In the event of a power outage, the home assessment team will direct reception to reschedule all Live Scan appointments as necessary. The home assessment team will continue to support Emergency Response Social Workers and other workers to complete relative home approvals, Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) requests, non-relative guardianship inquiries and court reports.

	<p><u>Permanency Planning</u></p> <p>Permanency Planning Social Workers will be asked to save any court reports they are working on to disk/CD and to begin working from the disk/CD. In the event of a power outage, social workers will work on court reports at the location with the back-up power source for all court dates within 10 working days. Each day the new 10-day parameter will apply. Social Workers who are not working on court reports will be expected to be in the field contacting children and substitute care providers. Notes will be recorded by hand and recorded in CWS/CMS when possible.</p> <p><u>Adoptions</u></p> <p>Adoptions Social Workers will be asked to save any 366.26 court reports they are working on to disk/CD and to begin working off of the disk/CD. In the event of a power outage, social workers will work on court reports at the location with the back-up generator for all court dates within 10 working days. Each day the new 10-day parameter will apply. Social Workers who are not working on court reports will be expected to be in the field doing home studies, taking relinquishments, and performing other necessary Adoptions work. Notes will be recorded by hand and recorded in CWS/CMS when possible.</p> <p>Probation:</p> <p>In the event wards are displaced from their assigned group home or foster home, cannot temporarily be returned to their parent/guardian nor immediately laterally placed, and cannot be housed in the JJC, the placement officer or assigned staff will secure temporary shelter for the ward(s) at juvenile detention facilities in neighboring/adjoining counties until appropriately placed or housed at Merced County JJCC. Failing the availability of temporary shelter in a neighboring county's juvenile detention facility, temporary shelter will be secured at other juvenile detention facilities within the state of California. Efforts will be made to house wards in juvenile detention facilities as close to Merced County as possible.</p> <p>8. Staff assignment process</p>
Essential Function:	
Process Description:	<p>CWS: CWS personnel, upon learning of the disaster, will contact their supervisor or Program Administrator for assignments and instruction.</p> <p>Probation: The Probation Department will dispatch all available staff, including Supervising Probation Officers, Deputy Probation Officers, and Juvenile Institutions Officers to locations where wards must be</p>

	retrieved and relocated. The Juvenile Services Program Manager and Juvenile Supervising Probation Officers will be responsible for contacting Probation personnel and coordinating this operation.
Essential Function:	9. Workload planning
Process Description:	<p>CWS: After ensuring the safety of their own families, CWS staff will report to their designated station and conduct their assigned duties and responsibilities, as long as it is safe. In the event the disaster results in the need for staff to be stationed at emergency shelters to handle intake and emergency response duties, staff will be assigned to provide those services on a rotation basis.</p> <p>Probation: Probation staff, primarily institution staff, will provide around the clock supervision of wards housed at JJCC. Wards who remain in a group home or foster home will be provided with around the clock supervision by those vendors/agencies. Wards will be removed from the care and custody of any vendor who cannot provide around the clock supervision.</p>
Essential Function:	10. Alternative locations for operations
Process Description:	<p>CWS: Alternative locations for operations include the Westside Family Service Center, the Main Street Youth Center, Highway 59 (Adult Services), AAA (Area Agency on Aging), or the Livingston outstation.</p> <p>Probation: The Probation Department will primarily utilize JJCC to house displaced wards. Should the Probation Department be unable to house the wards at JJCC, the department will secure temporary shelter for the ward(s) at juvenile detention facilities in neighboring/adjoining counties until appropriately placed or housed at Merced County JJCC. Failing availability of temporary shelter in a neighboring county's juvenile detention facility, temporary shelter will be secured at other juvenile detention facilities within the state of California. Efforts will be made to house the wards in juvenile detention facilities as close to Merced County as feasible.</p>
Essential Function:	11. Orientation and ongoing training
Process Description:	Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that their staff is familiar with the plan. The plan will also be added to the curriculum for the CWS training unit.

CWS Disaster Response Criteria B:	Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases:
Essential Function:	1. New child welfare investigation process
Process Description:	Intake Social Workers will continue to accept referrals during normal business hours as long as phone service is available. Assigned On-Call Social Workers will accept emergency referrals after hours. Emergency Response (ER) Workers will be assigned to investigate referrals. They will record preliminary information on the 24-91A and will enter all information into CWS/CMS as time allows or, in the event of a power outage, when the power is restored. In the event that cell phones are out, ER Workers will be assigned to report back to the agency by non-cellular phone or in person on a rotating 30 minute basis to check for immediate referrals. The ER supervisors will maintain a schedule of ER Worker reporting times. ER Workers must remain available by cell phones and pagers for as long as the services are available. Social Workers who detain will place the children or turn the children over to an assisting Social Worker for placement. In the event of a power outage, detaining Social Workers will be directed to a work site with electrical power to write petitions and detention reports. In addition, Social Workers will be assigned as needed to designated shelters to assist emergency workers with displaced children and families.
Essential Function:	2. Implementation process for providing new services
Process Description:	CWS staff will continue to provide pre-placement services and/or foster care placement services as needed, and as regulated by current legislation, regulations, and agency policies.
CWS Disaster Response Criteria C:	Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster:
Essential Function:	1. Communication structure – staff
Process Description:	In the event of a disaster, all CWS staff who are in a safe area are to contact their supervisor or Program Administrator for emergency assignments.
Essential Function:	2. Communication structure – child welfare personnel (phone tree)
Process Description:	CWS: Merced County Human Services Agency maintains an agency-wide Emergency Notification Roster, which is updated regularly by Human Resources. This roster is provided to all management staff. In the event of an emergency, agency management will utilize the roster to communicate information.
	Probation:

	<p>In the event of a disaster, the Juvenile Probation Services Program Manager will activate the disaster plan and will coordinate communication by contacting Juvenile Supervising Probation Officers who will in turn contact Deputy Probation Officers in their respective units. If additional assistance is needed, the Juvenile Probation Services Program Manager will contact the Adult Probation Services Program Manager and Custodial Program Manager for assistance from their respective divisions. Should the Juvenile Probation Services Program Manager be incapacitated or unavailable, the Adult Probation Services Program Manager will contact Juvenile Supervising Probation Officers, etc., as listed above.</p>
<p>Essential Function:</p>	<p>3. Communication structure – contracted services</p>
<p>Process Description:</p>	<p>CWS: The Program Administrator or Deputy Director will contact by phone all contracted service providers, and coordinate service delivery with them.</p> <p>Probation: The Probation Department phone list will be updated as necessary; each Supervisor, Program Manager, Division Director, Assistant Chief and Chief Probation Officer will maintain a current printed employee phone list. Department staff may also communicate by two-way radio as needed and available.</p>
<p>Essential Function:</p>	<p>4. Communication process when all normal channels are unavailable</p>
<p>Process Description:</p>	<p>CWS: All staff are assigned cell phones, and in the event of a disaster will be instructed to keep them turned on.</p> <p>Probation: Those with cell phones, pagers, or radios will turn them on and keep them available for use as needed.</p>
<p>Essential Function:</p>	<p>5. Communication frequency</p>
<p>Process Description:</p>	<p>CWS: Communication between management and line staff will happen at least once a day, and more often as necessary to advise of new information or instructions.</p> <p>Probation: Staff will be kept abreast of relevant new information as that information is known to the Chief Probation Officer, Assistant Chief, or Program Managers</p>

Essential Function:	6. Communication with media
Process Description:	<p>CWS: The Director, Deputy Directors, Agency Information Officer, or a designee will maintain contact with the media.</p> <p>Probation: Communication with the media will be restricted to the Chief Probation Officer, Assistant Chief Probation Officer, or the Merced County Director of Governmental Affairs.</p>
Essential Function:	7. Communication with volunteers
Process Description:	Communication will be coordinated through the County's Emergency Plan.
Essential Function:	8. Establishment of a toll-free number prior to disaster (include TTY)
Process Description:	The Merced County Office of Emergency Services will provide contact information to the public. If the agency phone system is still operable, greetings will be changed to provide the public with numbers to call.
CWS Disaster Response Criteria D:	Preserve essential program records:
Essential Function:	1. Record preservation process
Process Description:	<p>CWS: Merced County Human Services Agency maintains paper files for each child in placement or with an open case/referral. There are back up files available through the CWS/CMS provider. All records are also imaged through a separate system.</p> <p>Probation: Merced County Human Services Agency and California Department of Social Service Data Systems and Survey Design Bureau both have duplicate information regarding financial records pertaining to placement payments for wards.</p>
Essential Function:	2. Use of off-site back-up system
Process Description:	<p>CWS: CWS/CMS can be accessed through various computers throughout the county. In addition, the agency also has access to CWS/CMS through secure tokens assigned to specific line staff, supervisors, and managers. These tokens allow web based access to CWS/CMS from alternative</p>

	<p>sites.</p> <p>Probation: The probation data base can be accessed through various probation locations and other agencies throughout the county. Merced County Information Systems currently downloads information to a tape on a daily basis and stores it off site as a safety precaution.</p>
CWS Disaster Response Criteria E:	Coordinate services and share information with other states:
Essential Function:	1. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children reporting process
Process Description:	<p>CWS: The Social Worker assigned to any ICPC case will contact both the child and the care provider either by phone or in person, then contact the other state to advise them of the situation. They will also be responsible for arranging transportation back to the other state if necessary.</p> <p>Probation: The Probation Department does not place minors outside the State of California or supervise wards from other states placed in group homes or foster homes in California.</p> <p>2. Mental health providers</p>
Process Description:	The Merced County Mental Health Department may be called upon to provide mental health services during and after a disaster. The assigned Social Workers will make referrals and contact Mental Health when appropriate.
Essential Function:	3. Courts
Process Description:	Welfare and Institutions Code petitions and reports must be prepared and filed within the statutory guidelines during and after a disaster in the event the Court system is functioning. All other legal and civil rights accorded to children and their families will also continue to apply during or after a disaster. CWS personnel will make active efforts to comply with those regulations.
Essential Function:	4. Federal partners
Process Description:	The department will work with federal partners as appropriate to ensure the safety and well-being of children in Merced County.
Essential Function:	5. CDSS
Process Description:	The department will work with CDSS to ensure the safety and well-being of children in Merced

	County.
Essential Function:	6. Tribes
Process Description:	Tribes will be notified in the same manner as parents and legal guardians regarding the safety and well-being of Native American children in placement.
Essential Function:	7. Volunteers
Process Description:	Not applicable.