

Save the Children has learned that simple, low-cost and no-cost improvements to the design and location of emergency evacuation shelters, local assistance centers and other locations where children and families congregate before, during and after incidents can dramatically improve the safety and well-being of children and adults who live in them. Although these sites are intended to be temporary, addressing and improving residents' quality of life is important. Below are **best practices** that address children's unique needs and promote child safety and well-being while in temporary locations.

Evacuation and Sheltering

- To the greatest extent possible, keep families, neighborhood and area groups together. Supporting existing social networks contributes to security, particularly of children.

Shelter Dormitory Design

- Designate a clearly delineated physical area where children can play and interact with their peers. The space should be supervised by two or more trained, background-checked adults. Ensure that children of all abilities can use the space. Refer to Save the Children's "Child-Friendly Spaces Program" for detailed guidance on setting up and maintaining Temporary Respite Care for Children (a new National Standard of Mass Care in the US).
- Surround the designated area for children by a family sleeping area, then by single women, then single men and others with more extensive needs.
- Minimize the risk to young children and infants, who may be sleep walkers and/or be at risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, by providing age-appropriate sleeping materials such as portable cribs.

Hygiene and Bathroom Safety

- Women and girls should receive appropriate material and support for menstruation and nursing. It is important that these materials are appropriate and discreet and that women are involved in making decisions about what is provided to them.
- Designate a bathroom for children and families close in proximity to the designated space where children play and in close proximity to the family designated sleeping area.
- Provide separate restroom facilities for each gender, which are well lit to ensure security.
- Designate one staff and/or law enforcement official to monitor each bathroom. Bathrooms are dangerous places for children, especially those with multiple areas and shower facilities.
- Designate shower/bathing facilities with designated times for child bathing and family use and appropriate monitoring by shelter staff/security
- Provide a clean, private area where women can breast feed young infants. Encourage breastfeeding and have lactation consultants on site when possible.
- Provide sterile materials for newborns to bathe in, such as baby basins.
- Make available essential materials for young children such as baby diapers (including various sizes), pull-ups and baby wipes. Include an environmentally sound system for their disposal. Involve mothers in making decisions about what is provided.
- Make available age-appropriate, nutritious food for babies, toddlers and young children.

Facility Layout and Safety

- Designate bathrooms for family use only. Ensure that these facilities are adjacent to the family designated sleeping area and children's area, are well lit and have a monitor (staff or security personnel) at all times.
- Designate reunification areas within the shelter and facilitate reunification as needed.
- Provide lighting that allows residents to walk safely at night. When amenities such as bathrooms, laundry facilities, showers and/or other resources are located outside ensure there is proper lighting and security during all times of day and night.
- In the event portable bathrooms are positioned outside ensure they are as close to the family designated sleeping area as regulations permit. Again, ensure there is proper lighting and security during all times of day and night.
- Be attentive to traffic patterns and take pre-cautionary steps to separate areas where children and residents congregate from daily traffic activities and assisted evacuation routes. Establish and enforce normal traffic regulations (stop signs, posted speed limits, bus stops, etc.)
- Monitor unused areas within the building to reduce the opportunity for illegal behavior and violence.
- Be in-tune with potential safety hazards to children such as electrical outlets, stairs, and exits.
- Be sure to clearly mark multiple emergency exits.
- Identify green spaces for children to play and where possible, allow access to playground and out-door play materials.
- Identify community gathering points where residents can congregate, interact, contribute to each other's sense of hope and lessen isolation amongst residents as they cope with the demands of rebuilding their lives in their communities.

Additional Best Practices

- Count all children and infants upon registration. Document their ages and special needs.
- Provide clear reunification protocols for unaccompanied children and minors to facilitate family reunification.
- Ensure minimum standards for food, water, health and hygiene and access to medical care
- Provide children with the opportunity to resume normal activities, such as school and child care, as soon as possible.
- Work to ensure appropriate transportation is available to get children from the evacuation shelter site to schools.
- Arrange for children to participate in out-of-school activities such as after school programs and/or camp activities.
- When using air conditioning, control the room temperature. Infants lose body heat more easily than adults and, unlike adults, infants can't make enough body heat by shivering.
- Provide the infrastructure to ensure that single parents receive the support necessary to ensure the health and hygiene of their children
- Establish a community meeting site for residents and ensure facilitation of meetings to empower residents to identify and resolve issues, and share essential recovery information.