

## **Disaster Preparedness as Part of the Pediatric Medical Home**

Integral to the pediatric medical home is its ability to sustain itself through a natural or medical disaster. Its capacity to function as a central hub to disseminate information and medical care is even more crucial when normal channels of communication and local medical care are challenged or have been destroyed. Strategies for communication include texting, social media, preprinted protocols and instructions and even use of analogue media such as radio broadcasts.

Practices need to take preparatory steps to ensure they can maintain their integrity during natural disasters so as to minimize the interruption of access to medical care for their patients. Priorities include ensuring the safety of staff, arrangements for backup power, and guaranteeing the safety and possible transportation of vaccines and medications. Children with chronic problems and special needs are especially vulnerable during power outages and prior attention to sustaining equipment that requires power, as well as access to medications and services is essential. Preparing Disaster Action Plans for these patients is part of the care coordination that is inherent in the patient centered medical home. Ongoing education in the form of anticipatory guidance with all patients to promote family readiness for disasters should be integrated into routine preventive care.

In the aftermath of a disaster, the pediatric medical home serves as a resource to deliver psychological first aid to those populations affected so as to minimize toxic stress and to facilitate optimal long term recovery. Delivery of mental health services for these patients within the medical home is crucial.

In the event of a medical disaster such as a novel or resurgent infectious disease or pandemic, the pediatric medical home again serves as a primary hub to educate the medical community as well as families. This may take the form that is purely informational or involve actions such as medication or immunization campaigns as well as collaborations with community resources, local and state health departments, and hospitals.

For any of these events, the pediatric medical home is uniquely positioned and poised to provide optimal care to pediatric populations undergoing adversity as a result of natural or medical disasters by minimizing interruptions in access and services, and shepherding patients through the appropriate recovery process.