

Disaster Preparedness for Children With Disabilities: Durable Medical Equipment Needs

If you are an advocate, caregiver or family member of a child with a disability, it is important to know how and where to get durable medical equipment (DME) before a disaster or public health emergency occurs. DME is any medical equipment that provides therapeutic benefits to people who have certain injuries or illnesses. This flyer was created to aid the United States' disaster management efforts and find resources to help governmental agencies, nongovernmental and private organizations, and communities prepare, respond and recover from disasters and public health emergencies. It can also help people caring for a child with a disability make better informed decisions about the child's health and safety, and support the implementation of public-private collaborations in communities during a disaster.



A disaster or public health emergency can affect a community's ability to provide resources to children. Communities should be ready to address this problem before a disaster happens with help from local emergency management offices or private organizations. If a disaster does occur, knowing how and where to get resources for children with disabilities can save lives. Children are more vulnerable to disasters than adults and need different dosages of medicine and different sized equipment, including needles, tubing for oxygen masks and ventilators, wheelchairs and walkers. Resource allocation plans should make sure child-size equipment, antibiotics, antidotes and vaccines are available and can be given out in places where children usually gather, such as after-school programs, day care and child care services.

Information You Should Know Before a Disaster

If you are an advocate, caregiver or family member of a child with a disability, you should know:

- How and where to replace lost, damaged, destroyed or unusable DME, prosthetics and supplies. Documentation, such as a physician's order or medical necessity letter, or a meeting with a doctor is usually required to replace DME. However, some vendors and suppliers, including the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), can waive these requirements during a disaster or public health emergency. Knowing the size, make and model, or having the documentation for the DME you want to replace can help with the claim through Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program's authorities.
- How to connect and disconnect someone from a dialysis machine or similar equipment if you or a family member uses one. This will help lower your or a family member's risk of infection or injury, and make sure everyone is able to evacuate quickly and safely during a disaster. Check if your dialysis center offers this training.
- The name and contact information of your prescribing doctors and the pharmacy you go to.





Actions Families Can Take

- Save your health care provider's contact information, as well as links to governmental, nongovernmental and private DME provider websites on your phone.
- Activate Medical ID on your iPhone. Medical ID is a feature built into the iOS Health app that lets rescue workers see your medical information, including allergies, medications you take, organ donor status, blood types and emergency contacts, without having to unlock your phone. If you have an Android phone, there are similar apps you can download and use.
- Upload emergency records somewhere you can still access in case your phone is lost or damaged, such as your phone's cloud storage or personal email.
- Sign up to receive information or alerts about emergency events in your community.
- Review your transportation options and share them with your family in case you need to evacuate the area during a disaster.
- Read about life-sustaining equipment. More information can be found on the [Washington State Department of Social & Health Services' website](#).

Important Note: CMS does not have equipment available for acquisition. State Medicaid agencies may have contracts with DME providers and hospitals that might have this equipment.

Additional Resources

- **CMS:** [Disaster Response Toolkit](#)
- **CMS:** [Durable Medical Equipment Coverage](#)
- **CMS:** [Supplier Directory](#)
- **Department of Homeland Security (DHS):** [Civil Rights in Emergencies and Disasters](#)
- **DHS:** [Emergency Alerts](#)
- **DHS:** [Local Emergency Management Information](#)
- **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA):** [Community Planning and Capacity Building](#)
- **FEMA:** [Preparing for Disasters for People with Disabilities and Other Special Needs](#)



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The image on Page 1 is from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.