

MITIGATION CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

Mitigation is the action schools take to identify barriers students with special needs may face during an emergency and eliminate or reduce their adverse effects. A hazards and vulnerability assessment of the site will help in preparing the emergency plan and identifying improvements for safety.

Teachers, Counselors and School Nurses Survey - Students Needing Assistance OR Accommodations During Crisis

At the beginning of each year, teachers, counselors and school nurses should provide to the main office the name(s) of students/staff that will require special assistance in the event of an emergency. The type of assistance needed as a result of an injury is also required (e.g. broken leg during the year).

- Review how an emergency may impact the daily routine of students with special needs.
- Identify students and staff on the site with special needs and disabilities. The school principal must be aware of all students with special needs using school facilities and services.
- Identify the students who may need extra support in emergency crises, particularly those with multiple challenges.
- Make a list of the students on the school site who are on medication and their medication schedule.
- Maintain a list of all resources regularly relied upon and determine how a disaster might affect the use of them. Examples include: use of mobility aids, communication devices and electrically-dependent equipment.
- Identify all the stakeholders who should be considered in the plan (family, friends, service providers, personal attendants, physicians and others).
- Determine what short term accommodations to provide for students with temporary disabilities (e.g., broken leg)
- Assess potential hazards. Review evacuation equipment and routes.

Mitigation Strategies for Students with Disabilities

- Identify a pre-evacuation site that is accessible to students with disabilities
- Plan a primary and secondary evacuation route from each location the student is in during the course of the day.
- Arrange sufficient transportation ahead of time to accommodate the entire student special needs/staff population.
- Develop a schedule a daily activities and classes that identifies where students with special needs may be located each period of the day.
- Consider classroom location in placement of students with disabilities. Evaluate the accessibility of nearby exits and proximity to the school nurse.
- Conduct a test of the family notification system to assure that contact information is up-to-date to help decrease parent anxiety during a disaster.

Mental Health

Schools should establish prevention protocols that are aligned with best practices outlined in WVDE policies and Addressing Mental Health in School Crisis Prevention and Response: A Resource Guide for West Virginia Schools.

PREPAREDNESS CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS:

Preparedness focuses on what steps need to be taken to facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when an emergency occurs to keep the students safe. Collaboration with first responders in preparedness strategies and ongoing communications is essential and facilitates the safe integration of students with disabilities into emergency procedures.

Collect information about individuals with special needs on site, e.g., who has a disability, nature of disability, implications for the student concerning full participation in school emergency planning. Include teachers, schedules, classrooms, potential needs during an emergency, relevant strategies enabling student to participate successfully with peers in general school activities.

- Build on current accommodations, modifications and services identified in IEP or 504 plans or IHCP.
- Consider using the sample policy and consent form to share Personally Identifiable Information (PII) with persons planning for or assisting individuals with a disability during a health or safety emergency under FERPA and West Virginia Board of Education Policy 4350 found in the Appendix.
- Consult parents or guardians concerning care considerations if the special needs student is isolated at school for a short term or long-term basis. Inform parents about efforts to keep their child safe at school.
- Obtain necessary equipment and supplies, create evacuation maps and facilities information.
- Inform and train staff about emergency response protocols. Encourage teachers to discuss emergency procedures with parents as part of IEP, 504 or ICHP meeting or other review.
- Not all students who have an IEP, 504 or IHCP will need an individual plan as the plan for all other students meets their needs.
- See also checklists found in the Appendix for student specific planning.

Consider Using a Buddy System

Pairing students up with special needs students for emergency response, e.g., the “buddy system”, can help with critical backup when a skilled assistant is unavailable or separated from the class. Buddies **MUST** be willing and capable of assisting students (and the parents and teacher must agree) in an evacuation to accompany the individual to a safer area and wait for emergency responders. The buddy must be acceptable to the student with a special need. Also, teachers in adjacent classrooms can be pre-assigned joint responsibility for both classes if one of the teachers is busy with an injured student. To have an effective buddy system:

- Give the student the opportunity to select his or her own buddy.
- Identify a buddy who is appropriate (e.g. strong enough).
- Designate a backup buddy or buddies.
- Train for the specific need of the special needs student.
- Hold practice sessions to be certain buddies can do their tasks.
- Train buddies how to communicate with the student and how to safely evacuate.

Buddies must be able to make contact quickly with the student with special needs when the need arises. The following situations may interfere with this critical communication. Use the suggested strategy as an alternative.

- The buddy is in the building, but away from the customary work area. Have a trained backup buddy in place.
- The buddy cannot locate the person with a special need because the person is absent. Keep an updated roster of who is at school each day. Assign a temporary buddy when the primary buddy is absent.
- The buddy has left the class/program, and a new one has yet to be identified. Make an effort to find a replacement as soon as possible. Assign a temporary buddy until there is a permanent buddy.
- The buddy forgets or is frightened and abandons the special needs person. Check on each special needs student to assure he/she is accounted for during an evacuation. Practice drills will help diffuse real-time fright.

Medication Management

Most students with special needs have very individualized medication schedules that cannot be interrupted without serious consequences. Medicines or medical devices may not be available in emergency shelters. Make alternative arrangements to meet these needs. Consider how medicines can be stored in an emergency. Heat waves and power outages can affect the potency and integrity of some medications. Include an ice chest and cold packs among the school emergency supplies. If there is a power outage, the ice packs can extend the safe temperature range of medications requiring cold storage until the power is restored.

- If the student is on emergency life-saving medication, consider asking caregivers to supply a 24-hour supply (follow Policy 2422.8) with instructions; a refrigerated kit should be considered as needed.
- Collect and bring all emergency medications needed prior to either evacuation or lockdown.
- Transport emergency medications, supplies and equipment with the student.

Time Management

All children, including those with special needs are likely to respond to any form of stress following a crisis with more extreme reactions. Allow as much time for them as possible to make necessary preparations in an emergency. Some students with special needs will need more time to comprehend the emergency. The earlier the notification, the better the chances are for a successful evacuation. Consider what are the triggers and cues for these students and anticipate rather than react. Prepare students for changes in routine. Some students may need to be more protected or isolated to minimize distractions and sources of agitation during the height of a crisis. Adult supervision may need to be more intense for a while. Allow time for discussion of the traumatic events in a safe and familiar setting; provide choices in activities to the extent feasible to give these students some sense of control over even a small part of their lives.

Preparedness Supplies to Consider (These are not required but the list is intended to be a starting point for review.)

Classroom Supplies. A classroom that is used for teaching students with special needs should store disability-related supplies, assistive equipment and tools that may be required in an emergency.

- Batteries in different sizes, for adaptive equipment
- Water pouches for drinking
- Water for hygiene purposes
- Copies of all students' Emergency Information Forms (secured)
- Backup copies of medical prescriptions (secured)
- Hand tools (e.g., screwdriver, wrench, pliers)
- Heavy work gloves
- Whisk broom
- Tarp
- Solar/crank/battery radio
- Cell phone and phone charger
- Flashlight and extra batteries or crank flashlight
- First aid kit
- Small ice chest for refrigerated medications
- Feminine hygiene supplies
- Antibacterial soap
- Facial tissues
- Whistle/noisemaker

Individual Emergency “Go Kits”

Portable preparedness supplies individualized for each student's needs, called “Go Kits”, are an integral part of preparedness planning.

Assemble Go Kits at the beginning of the school year. Designate which staff members are responsible for reminding parents to replenish their child's kit and notify the school of changes.

Items that an Individual Go Kit may include:

- Lightweight uncomplicated backpack
- Emergency medication for up to 24 hours
- Emergency medical equipment (e.g. nebulizer, epi-pen, AED, portable oxygen, portable suction, etc.)
- Emergency Card or Intervention guide/plan should include:
 - » contact information
 - » medical requirements
 - » allergies and sensitivities
 - » adaptive equipment used and
 - » assistance needs and limitation.

Parents may provide for students with dietary restrictions by preparing an individual emergency go kit **if desired**. Children with special dietary needs should have a plan that considers those needs including possible allergies (e.g. nuts). Examples:

- Protein bars (without nuts or nut oil)
- Canned fruit
- Carbohydrate-free foods for meals (e.g. canned meat or jerky) - for diabetic students.