

Establish an Emergency Preparedness Mindset

David Jones: Welcome. My name is David Jones, and I'm a senior program specialist and a federal project officer. Thank you for joining us. Today's conversation will focus on emergency preparedness for natural disasters. As the lead for the Office of Head Start's comprehensive services, training, and technical assistance, EPRR workgroup, I bring greetings from Kari, Tala, Shauna, and Sharon.

Some of you may be aware, National Disaster Preparedness Month began in September. The Office of Head Start has been extremely responsive to the field, releasing the General Disaster Recovery Flexibilities, ACF IM HS 1901, which outlines specific flexibilities for grant recipient communities impacted by natural disasters.

The intent for this webinar is for it to be foundational. A springboard, if you will, for our team comprised of representation from the program operations division, TTA, and content experts from all of our National Centers. Our goal today is to provide information, guidance, and recommendations on how grant recipients can establish a year-round preventive mindset, drawing upon guidance from the Office of Head Start and resources developed by the National Centers to ensure that each of you are adequately preparing for natural and man-made disasters in an effort to mitigate risk.

We will anchor our conversation in a recently developed resource by the National Center on Program Management and Fiscal Operation that focuses on eight different types of disasters that adversely impact your centers and communities where they are housed. We are also aware of the impacts to children's development and how their ability to learn can be compromised as these events have adverse effects on their cognitive and social and emotional development. Quality environments begins with resilient facilities. But what exactly do we mean by resilient facilities? We're talking about facilities that are not only soundly built but are maintained in a manner in which the ongoing maintenance and repair helps to keep them safe from hazards.

We can look to the not-so-recent past in California, Florida, and Maui to come in close kinship with the kind of devastation that a natural disaster can render on a community. Many of you might not be aware – I know that I wasn't – that it was the winds from a hurricane that actually caused the fires in Maui.

If we were to think about equity as a consideration, it is almost always the poorest communities that are most severely impacted by these disasters. Poor neighborhoods have fewer resources, which usually results in more damage. To mitigate the impact of these types of experiences, we are encouraging that grant recipients engage in solid planning, preparation, practice, and execution, which could mean the difference between life and death. We are humbly appealing to you to listen to the presenters, immerse yourself in the content, and draw upon the resources that will be made available to you. Thank you, and I hope you enjoy the webinar.