

# NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY BULLETIN

NORTH CAROLINA CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY RESOURCE CENTER

MARCH 2002

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## About The Resource Center

The NC Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center is a project of the Department of Maternal and Child Health, School of Public Health, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Funding for the Resource Center originates with the Maternal and Child Health Title V Block Grant of USDHHS's Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau, awarded to the University under a contract from the Division of Public Health, NCDHHS.

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## Emergency Preparedness

Building Confidence through Planning, Preparation, and Practice

Part 2

About six months have passed since the September 11th terrorist attacks. As time passes, we work to develop ways of coping and putting these events into perspective somehow. Some of us have tried to understand more about the world we live in and the people who live in it. Some of us have shut down, turned off the news, and looked in new directions for comfort or a sense of security. A wide range of emotions, reactions, and interpretations are occurring all around us every day. We see flags, bumper stickers, billboards, television and newspaper commentaries that express "These colors will not run" next to a flag, or "Peace is Patriotic."

When will life return to normal? Jim Greenman (2001) suggests in his manuscript, *What Happened to the World?*, "... almost certainly, never. The country and its families will construct a new idea of normal so that life can go on and we can rebuild. We live in a 24-hour instant news culture where dramatic images of horror or grief surround our children. The 'new normal' for children will have to be a world where they come to terms with a new sense of threat and possible conflict, but nonetheless have the internal resources and support to live happy, productive lives." (Greenman, 2001, p. 10).



*This issue of the Child Care Health and Safety Bulletin is the second of a two-part issue on Emergency Preparedness. It will include information to help child care providers and families identify threats and how to deal with them, and also to identify ways to support children, recognize symptoms that suggest that help is needed, and be there for the children in our lives to redefine today's world and find ways to rebuild.*



## How Can Child Care Providers Help Children?

Child care providers enter their work every day facing the difficult task of working with a group of children and their families who may have different viewpoints toward the terrorist acts and the world we now live in, and who may be coping quite differently. Crises can bring out the best and worst in each of us (Greenman, 2001, p. 55).

**The worst:** Simplistic answers  
Avoiding issues  
Bias  
Proceeding as if nothing has changed

**The best:** Thoughtfulness  
Caring  
Kindness  
Courage  
The opportunity to truly guide children through important learning

Greenman (2001, pp. 55-56) points out that children learn what people and societies are really about in times of crisis. Teachers and child care providers need to be role models and teach the following in their classrooms:

**Thoughtfulness:** What we think and do and what others across the world think and do is based in knowledge and beliefs we need to make an effort to understand.

**Caring:** There may be children, parents, or teachers who are unfairly singled out for their differences.

**Courage:** The courage to accept differences and different views, the courage to help others in their confusion, fear, loss, or grief while we tend to our own.

**Learning:** Learning more about the wider world of people and culture, and the close-up world we inhabit.

Important to helping children is knowing and understanding them, listening (really listening) to them, and responding in a way that is appropriate for their age.

Also, to be able to take care of children, you need to *take care of yourself* (Greenman, 2001, p. 17).

- Talk about your feelings with adults with whom you feel secure.
- Try to create a daily routine and rituals that support your current needs.

- Try to create a daily routine and rituals that support your family's current needs.
- Live well: eat right, get exercise, sleep.
- Cry when you need to, and seek solitude when you have to.
- Take breaks from the news and headlines.
- Take breaks from others who bring you down.
- Give yourself and those around you some slack for poor behavior under stress.
- Seek help if you feel that life is not becoming more manageable.
- Replenish your spirit with friends, faith, family, music, or nature.

Teachers can recognize children who are at risk for stress related problems and watch for signs that help is needed. "Stress in children as well as adults is cumulative. In other words, the more stress in a child's life, the more likely that he or she will experience some mental health problems. Stress factors related to anxiety disorders include (Shapiro, 2001, p. 6):

- A divorce or parental separation within the last year
- A history of shyness, fears, and anxieties
- Prolonged separation from parents due to military service or business trips
- A new baby in the house
- Parental illness
- The recent loss of someone close to the child (grandparent, relative, or a pet)
- Social isolation (particularly due to teasing at school)
- A recent move to a new neighborhood or school
- A childhood illness that requires hospitalization."

Jim Greenman (2001, p.57) offers suggestions for teachers and caregivers. Consider how you might incorporate these into your daily plans so that they are age-appropriate and meaningful for the children you care for.

- Expand the children's knowledge of the world: books, pictures, music, films, food, art, field trips, and in-classroom visitors.
- Provide books at the appropriate level that address issues of respect for others, conflict, and overcoming fear and adversity.
- Sustain or create a democratic classroom with participatory decision-making. Make the room safe for the discussion of conflicting ideas.
- Help children construct their own solutions to disagreements.
- Develop emergent curriculum: Create projects based on the children's current interests and concerns.
- Use conflict to learn. Take advantage of disagreements far away and in the room to learn about conflict resolution, acceptance, and self-control.
- Provide materials that encourage children's play and expression representing their feelings and thoughts. Children need to work through issues, allow fantasy play or art as long as it does not hurt others.
- Go beyond acceptance and tolerance. Research and celebrate differences in identity, culture, and beliefs.
- Notice unfairness and injustice in daily life and the news.

- Find the hope and goodness in every dark moment: the caring, helping, courage, tolerance, and compassion.
- Help children take action and take action with them. Write letters, send pictures, raise money, and connect with others.
- Take humanitarian action. International and national relief efforts always need support.
- Encourage empathy by allowing the safe and respectful discussion of feelings of hurt, fear, loss, and doubt (never forcing participation).
- Become language-sensitive and teach children to be alert to hurtful language.
- Value and respect individual children, and try to eliminate stressful situations when necessary (new transitions, unnecessary challenges).
- Treat parents as partners. Keep them informed and involve them in your efforts.

## Biological Threats

There are a number of biological agents that could *potentially* be dangerous. Two that have been mentioned frequently following the September 11 terror attacks are anthrax and smallpox.

**Anthrax:** Anthrax is a serious illness that can potentially be fatal if not treated. Anthrax is not contagious, and, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the nationwide risk for anthrax is extremely low. Because there is potential for the infection to be fatal, however, in the Fall of 2001 many recommendations were made regarding mail handling after

several cases resulted from receiving envelopes containing anthrax spores. The CDC offers these recommendations:

- Do not open suspicious mail.
- Keep mail away from your face when you open it.
- Do not blow or sniff mail or mail contents.
- Avoid vigorous handling of mail, such as tearing or shredding.
- Wash your hands after handling the mail.
- Leave undisturbed any suspicious mail containing powder until the arrival of law enforcement authorities and/or hazardous material team of specialists.

There is no commercially available vaccine against anthrax. The Department of Defense is vaccinating troops that may be exposed in armed conflict, and CDC has also offered the vaccine as an option to persons exposed to high doses of anthrax spores, in addition to antibiotic treatment. The antibiotics used were ciprofloxacin (Cipro®) or doxycycline in most cases. These are not normally prescribed to children, but physicians may decide to do so based on risk benefit considerations. Self-medication is not recommended, and stockpiling has been discouraged. Rather, when the need arises, the National Stockpile System is activated by CDC, and the drugs needed for treatment are provided within hours for distribution in any state.

**Smallpox:** Smallpox was declared globally eradicated in 1980 by the World Health Organization. The last known case occurred in Somalia in

*Continued on Page 7*

## References:

- Greenman, Jim. (2001). "What Happened to the World? Helping Children Cope in Turbulent Times". Manuscript available through NAEYC, 1-800-424-2460, ext. 604 or resource\_sales@naeyc.org.
- Shapiro, Lawrence E. (2001). "Will They Fly A Plane Into Our House?" *How to Talk to Children About Terrorism*. Norwalk, CT: Play2Grow, LLC



## Alerts and Announcements

### Lead Poisoning Hazard

Lead is highly toxic. Exposure to it can be dangerous, especially for children who are 6 years old or younger. Children can be exposed to lead either through inhalation of lead contaminated dust or ingestion of an item which contains lead.

A lead poisoning hazard was recently identified that was associated with **red and yellow sleeping mats** that have deteriorating vinyl covers.

Laboratory testing revealed levels of lead that would constitute a lead poisoning hazard. The mats in question were purchased five years ago or more. Ingestion is of particular concern in the case of these mats, especially since the children may be able to tear off pieces of the mat and consume them. Child care providers should be on alert, replace mats that have deteriorating covers, and call their local health department if they need more information about lead poisoning.

### New Immunization Requirement

The N. C. Commission for Health Services now requires children born on or after April 1, 2001, to be immunized against varicella (chickenpox). The law becomes effective April 1, 2002. One dose should be given between the age of 12 and 19 months. If you want more information, call the North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center at 1-800-246-6731.



At Your Service

**1-800-246-6731**  
**North Carolina Child Care Health & Safety Resource Center**

Providing Training, Consultation & Resources for North Carolina's Child Care Community

## DON'T MISS IT!

*Healthy Child Care NC Conference,*

**March 12, 2002**

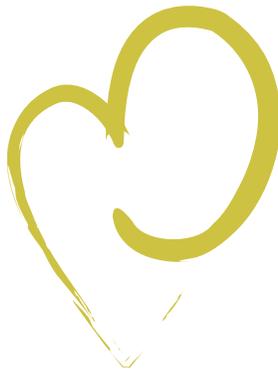
*Infant – Toddler Symposium,*

**March 13, 2002**

**William and Ida Friday Center**

**100 Friday Center Drive, Chapel Hill**

Contact the North Carolina Child Care Health and Safety Resource Center at **1-800-246-6731** for information.



## March is

National Nutrition Month

Mental Retardation Awareness Month

National Eye Donor Month

Workplace Eye Health and Safety Month

National Kidney Month

**March 3 – 9** is Save Your Vision Week

**March 4 – 8** is National School Breakfast Week

**March 11 – 17** is Brain Awareness Week

**March 17 – 23** is National Poison Prevention Week

**March 17 – 23** is National Inhalants and Poisons Awareness Week

**March 24** is World Tuberculosis Day

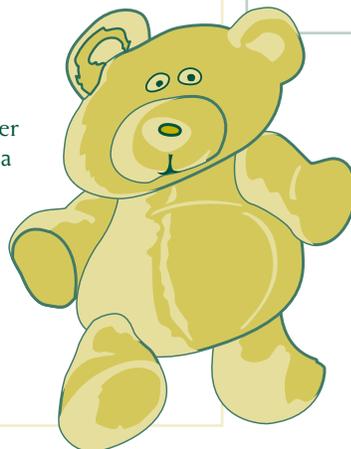
**March 27** is American Diabetes Alert



### Common Behaviors for Children After Disasters

Children react differently to emergencies. Some children may be very upset, while others may show no reaction at all. Other children may react to an event days or weeks after the event has happened. Parents should discuss their children's behavior changes and ways to deal with them with their medical care providers. The American Academy of Pediatrics has identified the following behaviors in children following disasters:

- Children may be upset about losing a favorite toy, stuffed animal, or other favorite object.
- Children may show changes in personality after disasters.
- Children may have nightmares, or be afraid to sleep alone or in the dark.
- Children may become upset easily, cry more, or be "whiney".
- Children may revert to earlier behaviors such as thumb-sucking.
- Children may feel anxiety over separating from parents after a disaster and not want to attend school or child care.
- Children may feel guilty that they said or did something to cause the disaster.



### How Can Parents Answer Questions and Help Children With Terrorism?

Children sort through their own feelings in part by observing the adults around them and observing their reactions. It is hard for any of us to sort through our feelings and know how to react to terrorist acts like the ones we experienced six months ago. A first step in helping children cope with these turbulent times is to sort through our own feelings and get the support we need. We can then have the strength to help others. Children need our strength. They ask important questions when disaster strikes:

- Will I be okay?
- Will you be okay?
- Will everybody I care about be okay?

We all feel frightened and vulnerable to some extent. These fears should be respected and responded to. Talking to children, listening, and responding to their questions reassures them. Children are different from adults and from each other in the ways they respond to crisis. At different stages in their development, they view the world differently and respond in their own way and with different intensities. Being there for our children, and encouraging them to talk about their feelings, can help in times of crisis.

1.800.246.6731

## Coping Mechanisms: Strategies for Helping Children Deal with Tragedy

- ❑ Continuously reassure your children that you will help to keep them safe.
- ❑ Turn off the TV. Overexposure to the media can be traumatizing. If your older children are watching the news, be sure to watch with them.
- ❑ Be aware that your child's age will affect his or her response. Adolescents in particular may be hard hit by these kinds of events. Obtaining counseling for a child or adolescent soon after a disaster may reduce long-term effects.
- ❑ Calmly express your emotions. Remember that a composed demeanor will provide a greater sense of security for your child.
- ❑ Give your children extra time and attention and plan to spend more time with your children in the following months.
- ❑ Let your children ask questions, talk about what happened, and express their feelings.
- ❑ Play with children who can't talk yet to help them work out their fears and respond to the atmosphere around them.
- ❑ Keep regular schedules for activities such as eating, playing and going to bed to help restore a sense of security and normalcy.
- ❑ Consider how you and your child can help. Children are better able to regain their sense of power and security if they feel they can help in some way.

### Reference:

NC Division of Child Development (Nov. 2001)  
*Emergency Preparedness Tips for Child Care Providers*, retrieved  
1/8/02 from [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/provider.htm](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/provider.htm).



## Information Child Care Providers Need From Parents

Emergencies may arise during the day when parents are working and children are attending school or child care. Parents can help caregivers by providing the following current information.

- ❑ Current emergency contact phone numbers.
- ❑ Names and telephone numbers of people who can pick up your children in case of emergencies.
- ❑ Current emergency medical information, including name and phone number of physician and health insurance information.
- ❑ Permission to take emergency action and/or seek emergency medical care.
- ❑ Up to date emergency medical care plans for children with special health needs.

Parents should be familiar with the child care program's policy on handling emergencies and know where the designated relocation place for their child care is in the event of an emergency evacuation.

## Internet Sites

- ❑ [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/disasterpreparedness/index.html](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/disasterpreparedness/index.html)
- ❑ [www.ncgov.com](http://www.ncgov.com) ("Safety and Security" link)
- ❑ [www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/)
- ❑ [www.fema.gov/pte/prep.htm](http://www.fema.gov/pte/prep.htm)
- ❑ <http://pbskids.org/rogers/parents/sept11.htm>
- ❑ <http://homeschool.crosswalk.com>



1977. Because of the potential for smallpox to be used as a bioterrorist weapon, the Centers for Disease Control has developed an interim smallpox response plan and guidelines to deal with an outbreak of smallpox. To date, there have been no cases of smallpox associated with bioterrorist activity. A smallpox vaccine is not available commercially in the United States. There was no recognized need for a smallpox vaccine until the bioterrorism threat surfaced. The CDC has access to 15 million doses of vaccine. Contracts for additional vaccine production were awarded in 2001. The vaccine offers protection when administered up to four days after exposure to smallpox. Isolation of cases and vaccination of those exposed is considered sufficient to prevent the transmission of smallpox.

The risk of exposure to communicable biological agents like smallpox is not known at this time. Regardless of whether North Carolina children face threats from bioterrorism or just normal childhood diseases, there are some simple steps that can be taken to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. The NC Division of Child Development continues to recommend that child care providers maintain high standards for handwashing and other aspects of sanitation in facilities providing care to children. The main benefit of these actions will be to prevent the spread of upper respiratory infections and diarrheal diseases, as these remain the most common diseases in child care settings:

- Ask ALL children, staff, and visitors (including parents) to wash their hands upon entering the center or family child care home.
- Have children and staff wash their hands when coming in from outside; before preparing, serving, or eating food; after diapering and toileting; and after cleaning up coughs, sniffles and sneezes.
- Apply universal precautions in dealing with body fluids such as blood and vomit.
- In addition to submitting incident reports for child care related medically attended injuries and illnesses (as required), have your staff report any unusual health conditions or frequent occurrences of more common illnesses to the local health department. In 1993-94, early reporting of Shigellosis by some child care facilities enabled them to avoid outbreaks that occurred in child care elsewhere.

## Other Security Threats

- **Monitor access to your facility.** For example, as required, make sure that adults who pick up children from your program are authorized to do so. For any adult whom staff do not know, check that the adult's identification matches information on file about those authorized to pick up the child. Consider limiting access areas to one entrance/exit and require all visitors to sign in.
- **Develop policies about information to share with the public.** For example, educate your staff about which information should (or should not) be shared, with whom, and how. Advise staff on what to do if they receive an unusual information request.
- **Be alert and aware of your surroundings.** Report anything out of the ordinary. For example, be aware of adults near your center or home who are not parents or adults from the neighborhood. Report anything out of the ordinary to the police and/or your Division of Child Development Licensing Consultant.

## References:

- American Academy of Pediatrics (Sept. 2001). *Academy responds to questions about smallpox and anthrax vaccines*, retrieved 1/8/02 from [www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/smlpoxanthrax1.htm](http://www.aap.org/advocacy/releases/smlpoxanthrax1.htm).
- Centers for Disease Control (Dec. 18, 2001). Statement by the Department of Health and Human Services Regarding Additional Options for Preventive Treatment for those Exposed to Inhalation Anthrax. *HHS News*, retrieved 1/8/02 from <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/DocumentsApp/Anthrax/12182001/hhs12182001.asp>.
- Centers for Disease Control (Dec. 18, 2001). *Smallpox: Disease of the Past and Protection for the Future*, retrieved 1/8/02 from <http://www.cdc.gov/nip/smallpox/>.
- NC Division of Child Development (Nov. 2001). *Emergency Preparedness Tips for Child Care Providers*, retrieved 1/8/02 from [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/provider.htm](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/provider.htm) (toward bottom of page).
- NC Division of Child Development (Nov. 2001). *Security Awareness Tips for Child Care Providers*, retrieved 1/17/02 from [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/provider.htm](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd/provider.htm) (toward bottom of page).

## Internet Resources

Resources are abundant on emergency preparedness, and sorting through them can be a cumbersome task. Many resources have duplicate information, and so much has become available over the internet since Sept. 11, it can be overwhelming. Several websites listed below are particularly appropriate for child care providers and families.

- The website for **North Carolina Division of Child Development** includes Emergency Preparedness Tips for Child Care Providers, Security Awareness Tips for Child Care Providers, and a sample Child Care Emergency Plan as well as links to other information and resources. It also includes Coping mechanisms: Strategies for helping children deal with tragedy. This and other information can be found at [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/dcd) (click on link to Providers page, then Provider Resources, then Emergency Preparedness).
- The **Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services** website has a number of links to disaster reactions and working with children after a disaster and can be found at [www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/disasterpreparedness/index.html](http://www.dhhs.state.nc.us/mhddsas/disasterpreparedness/index.html).
- A new web site created by Gov. Easley's task force on anti-terrorism to help provide citizens with vital information on current safety issues and the latest updates on North Carolina's security efforts can be found at [www.ncgov.com](http://www.ncgov.com) under the link "Safety and Security." The site contains answers to frequently asked questions on current health and safety issues, links to other local, state and federal resources, phone numbers and the latest news on all the steps North Carolina is taking to increase security.
- The **American Red Cross** provides information on being prepared, including family disaster planning, disaster safety (appropriate responses to different types of emergencies), and links to other relevant sites on emergency preparedness at [www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/](http://www.redcross.org/services/disaster/beprepared/).
- The **Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)** provides information on steps to take to prepare for a wide range of natural disasters and technological disasters, family preparedness, emergency planning, practice, supply recommendations, etc., at [www.fema.gov/pte/prep.htm](http://www.fema.gov/pte/prep.htm).
- **Fred Rogers of Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood®** offers guidance for parents and children in the aftermath of Sept. 11th. Advice and video clips are available on PBS Kids website at <http://pbskids.org/rogers/parents/sept11.htm>. Additional advice includes how to talk with and comfort your children are found at <http://homeschool.crosswalk.com>.

### *We Want To Hear From You!*

Please call the Resource Center and tell us what topics you would like to see in upcoming *Health Bulletins*. All callers will be eligible for a drawing to win a prize! Thanks! 1-800-246-6731.

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## HEALTH BULLETIN

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1-800-246-6731



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