



## Preventing Violence after a Natural Disaster

The increased stress associated with disruptions in families; challenges in meeting daily needs such as food, water, and shelter; as well as disruptions in health and law enforcement services can increase the possibility of violence. Strategies for preventing violence after disasters should focus on providing assistance to individuals in need and developing supportive networks for managing daily tasks.

- Prevent Child Maltreatment
- Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome
- Managing Stress in Relationships
- Prevent Sexual Violence
- Prevent Suicide
- Prevent Youth Violence

### Prevent Child Maltreatment

- **Be a caring parent.** After any natural disaster, parents are under more stress. It is important to still continue to care for your children. Children are strongly affected by their parents' reactions.
- **Comfort a crying child.** Never shake a child – shaking a child may cause injury or death.
- **Keep your child safe.** It is important to know who your child is with and where they are at all times.
- **Ask others for help.** Ask trusted friends, family, and other parents for a break if you're stressed. Breaks are needed when dealing with greater stress.
- **Refer children separated from families to people in charge.** Doing this will help children who are left without parents or who are separated from their families to be identified and get special care.
- **Report suspected abuse or neglect.** If you have reason to believe a child has been or may be harmed, inform the authorities or call the hotline for the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse at 1-800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373).

For more information, see the "Child Maltreatment Prevention Fact Sheet" at [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/cmfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/cmfacts.htm).

### Prevent Shaken Baby Syndrome

- **Do not shake your baby.** Shaking a baby by the shoulders, arms, or legs can cause severe injury and death.
- **Try to find the reason for the crying.** Make sure all of your baby's basic needs (food, diapers, if there is too much or too little clothing, etc.) are met. You can also check for signs of sickness or pain, like diaper rash.
- **Comfort your baby.** Try rubbing your baby's back, gently rocking your baby, giving a pacifier, singing, or talking.
- **Take a walk.** Take your baby for a walk in a stroller or ride in a car using a secure child safety seat in the back seat.
- **Take a time out.** It is normal for babies to cry a lot. This may make parents very stressed. When you feel helpless or angry, take a minute to relax and calm down to reduce some of the stress you feel.
- **Talk with someone.** Talk with a good friend or family member about how you are feeling. This will help you take a break and calm down.
- **If you need more information on the best way to deal with a crying baby,** call the hotline for the National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse at 1-800-CHILDREN (1-800-244-5373).

For more information, see the "Shaken Baby Syndrome Fact Sheet" at [www.cdc.gov/communication/tips/shaken\\_baby.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/communication/tips/shaken_baby.htm).

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### Managing Stress and Relationships

- **Take action if you see something.** If you see someone who is being violent, take action. If it is safe, remove the person who is in danger from the situation. If your safety is at risk, inform a person in charge about the possible danger.
- **Ask for support.** If you feel you are in danger, get support from trusted sources like counselors, friends and family, and health clinics. This will help keep you safe.
- **Do not use drugs and alcohol.** These can increase feelings of anxiety and stress and may put you in places where you could be attacked.
- **Take a time out.** Relationships become more stressful when families try to replace lost housing, jobs, and find peace. If you feel stressed, take a time out.
- **Get involved – Stay active.** Volunteer for work in the shelter, community or school.
- **If you feel you are at risk for violence in your relationship** or are concerned about other people's risk, inform a person in charge about suspected danger or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233) or 1-800-787-3224 (TTY).

For more information, see the “Intimate Partner Violence Prevention Fact Sheet” at [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/ipvfacts.htm).

### Prevent Sexual Violence

- **Take action.** If you see someone who is being attacked, take action. If it is safe, get the person away from the attacker. If your safety is at risk, tell the person in charge what happened.
- **Keep yourself safe.** Take precautions for your safety. Do not be alone. Stay with a group of trusted friends if possible.
- **Go to safe places.** If possible, go to places where there are a lot of people.
- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** These can increase feelings of worry and stress and may put you in places where you could be attacked.
- **Find support.** If you are a victim of sexual violence or you know someone who is, talk to a good friend or family member. They can offer the support you need.
- **If sexual violence does occur,** find someone you can trust to report the occurrence to, or call the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network at 1-800-656-HOPE (1-800-656-4673).

For more information, see the “Sexual Violence Prevention Fact Sheet” at [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/svfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/svfacts.htm).

### Prevent Suicide

- **Stay in touch with family.** If possible, stay in touch with trusted family, friends, and neighbors to help deal with the stress and losses that can happen after a natural disaster.
- **Get help from professionals.** Ask for help from doctors or other leaders who are trained to help.
- **Stay active.** Go for a walk or participate in other group activities to keep moving.
- **Keep busy.** Help others in your shelter, community or school.
- **If you or someone you know is having thoughts of suicide,** call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

For more information, see the “Suicide Prevention Fact Sheet” at [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/suifacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/suifacts.htm).

### Prevent Youth Violence

- **Respect others and value differences.** Even if you feel stressed or anxious, do not bully, tease, or talk about others.
- **Get involved in the clean-up effort.** Help with a community or local rescue clean-up effort.

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- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** Stay away from alcohol and drugs as well as people who use them. These can increase feelings of worry and stress and may put you in places where you could be attacked.
- **Learn other ways to resolve arguments and fights.** Talk through arguments without yelling, hitting or pushing, and tell your friends to do the same.
- **Do not carry weapons.** Carrying a weapon will not make you safer and often stirs up arguments and increases the chances that you will be seriously harmed.
- **If you know someone is planning to harm someone else - report him or her.** Tell a trusted adult, such as a counselor, or parent. If you are afraid and believe that telling will put you in danger or lead to retaliation, call the authorities.

For more information, see the “Youth Violence Prevention Fact Sheet” at [www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/yvfacts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/yvfacts.htm).