

## SIERRA COUNTY CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN

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This template is intended to be used as a guide to help counties incorporate the 2006 federal disaster response criteria as part of local child welfare plans regarding children and non-minor dependents. Children and non-minor dependents in the probation system must also be included in the plan. County plans must be amended to include Child Welfare Services (CWS) Disaster Response Plans and be operational by September 28, 2007.

In September 2006, Congress passed the Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law [PL] 109-288). PL 109-288 amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to reauthorize the Promoting Safe and Stable Families Program. Among other changes, PL 109-288 established requirements for states on disaster planning in child welfare under section 6 (a)-(16). Accordingly, counties are requested to address the following program areas in developing local disaster readiness plans.

## CHILD WELFARE SERVICES DISASTER RESPONSE PLAN TEMPLATE

<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria A:</b>	<b>Identify, locate, and continue availability of services for children and non-minor dependents under state care or supervision who are displaced or adversely affected by a disaster, including children from other states:</b>
Essential Function:	1. Identification and location process of children who may be displaced, including children from other states
Process Description:	<p><i>Initially, the individual responsible for contact is the on-call social worker or probation officer until all Health and Human Service emergency procedures can be put into place. Identifying information and location of children can be accessed in the automated Child Welfare Services Case Management System (CWS/CMS) and through hard copy files in the Department's office. CWS/CMS is accessible at both the Loyalton office and the Downieville office. CWS/CMS is also accessible remotely through a Virtual Private Network (VPN). Because Sierra County social workers and probation officers have small caseloads, they are familiar with the location of children in placement, so many times, using the automated systems would not be necessary. Should social workers and probation officers not have access to CWS/CMS or they are unavailable and children and families must be located, Sierra County Health and Human Services will contact California Department of Social Services (CDSS) to access CWS/CMS on our behalf to obtain relatives/Non-Related Extended Family Member (NREFM) addresses or the Foster Family Agency (FFA) for foster parent addresses. Any child placed from another state would be included in the CWS/CMS system; therefore, they would be identified in the same manner as other children mentioned above.</i></p> <p><i>When social workers or probation officers are aware of a disaster in any of the locations where children under our County jurisdiction are placed, they will use all resources available to ascertain the location of the potentially displaced children. A social worker, probation office or supervisor would contact the relative/NREFM, FFA and/or the group home where children have been placed. If Health and Human Services is unable to contact those counties in which our children are placed, Health and Human Services would access the local Office of Emergency Services (OES) to make contact with those counties to obtain information on the affected area where these children are placed.</i></p>

Essential Function:	2. Communication process with child care providers
Process Description:	<p><i>Following a disaster, the on-call social worker or probation officer will be the initial contact until all Health and Human Service emergency procedures can be put into place. Sierra County social workers and probation officers will attempt to call and/or text substitute relative/NREFM or foster parents to inquire about health and safety of children in their care. Social workers will contact all necessary FFAs directly or after hours using their on-call telephone numbers. Families certified by FFAs who are relocating or evacuating to other areas are required to call their FFA with updated contact information, including address and telephone number. It is expected the FFA then will contact the County social worker or probation officer directly through text, telephone or e-mail. If no contact is made by the FFA within three hours of the disaster, the on-call social worker will attempt to call the FFA.</i></p>
Essential Function:	3. Identification of evacuation procedures – Event known in advance
Process Description:	<p><i>In the event of a planned evacuation, Sierra County Health and Human Services would communicate the plan provided by the Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator or the Sierra County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). If time allows, the social workers will process and/or practice this plan with the placement and the children.</i></p> <p><i>Assigned social workers or probation officer will notify all relative/NREFMs and foster parents as well as necessary FFAs to begin the identification/location process of children and assure placements and FFAs are aware of evacuation expectations. Should social workers and probation officers not have access to CWS/CMS or they are unavailable and children and families must be located, Sierra County Health and Human Services will contact CDSS to access CWS/CMS on our behalf to obtain relatives/NREFM addresses or the FFA for foster parent addresses.</i></p> <p><i>If children are placed in other counties, but in Sierra County jurisdiction, when social workers or probation officers are aware of a disaster, they will use all resources available to ascertain the location of children to be evacuated. If Health and Human Services is unable to contact those counties in which our children are placed, Health and Human Services would access the local Office of Emergency Services (OES) to make contact with those counties to obtain information on the affected area where these children are placed.</i></p>

Essential Function:	4. Identification of evacuation procedures – Event not known in advance
Process Description:	<p><i>To notify staff of their expectation to assist in the event of a disaster, Sierra County has a telephone tree of all County employees. Sierra County is also part of the California Health Alert Network (CAHAN) for notifications of disasters and emergencies.</i></p> <p><i>Foster parents certified by an FFA are required to complete emergency disaster plans which are posted in a visible place in their home. Copies of these plans are kept by the FFA. Foster families are instructed to notify the FFA office of any pending emergency evacuation. If the foster family cannot directly notify the FFA, they have been instructed to contact the Sierra County social worker or probation officer responsible for the children. They have been provided the information to contact Health and Human Services after hours. Sierra County will ensure relatives and NRFEMs have an evacuation plan in the event an emergency disaster were to occur. Any placement may contact an available emergency response official who might have access to communications and be able to report the location of the children to a County social worker or probation officer.</i></p>
Essential Function:	5. Identification of shelters
Process Description:	<p><i>There are no permanent shelters in Sierra County. Temporary shelters within Sierra County are identified by local officials. Depending on the type and extent of the emergency, shelters will be made available and staffed by Health and Human Services staff and the American Red Cross. Typical shelter locations are schools, community halls, and senior centers. County social workers and probation officers will be informed of these situations and will work with the relative/NREFM or FFA who is responsible for the foster home along with emergency officials to arrange adequate and safe housing for children in a disaster.</i></p>
Essential Function:	6. Parental notification procedures
Process Description:	<p><i>When the status of children in placement in a disaster area is known, a social worker or probation officer will make reasonable efforts to contact the biological parents of the children, and provide information about the status of their children as it becomes available. If they do not reach a parent, they will continue to attempt contact. If they do not hear back from a parent within 48 hours, they will attempt to reach other family such as siblings, grandparents, or aunts and uncles.</i></p>

Essential Function:	7. Alternative processes for providing continued services
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County Health and Human Services will continue to focus on maintaining continuity of existing services in the aftermath of a disaster. However, depending on the nature of the disaster and extent of damage to essential services, the social worker or probation officer will determine necessary services to maintain children safely until the emergency situation is stabilized. Once the child is stabilized, services may again be initiated. During the time of an emergency disaster, any person could seek services at the shelter.</i>
Essential Function:	8. Staff assignment process
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County has three social worker and one social worker supervisor, as well as, two probation officers and one Chief of Probation. Sierra County's disaster plan requires Social Services employees to respond to and open the emergency shelter. The American Red Cross will take the lead in running the shelter when they arrive on scene. Social workers who are able to respond will report to the emergency shelter. New emergency response referrals or case problems or issues can be assigned to an available social worker or probation officer at the emergency shelter. This process will be reevaluated with each new referral to meet staff demands. Probation will follow their policy for staff assignment.</i>
Essential Function:	9. Workload planning
Process Description:	<i>Available Social Services staff will be working at the emergency shelter. Case loads will not shift or change if all social workers are available. Because Sierra County is a small county, the social worker supervisor is intimate in the understanding of cases. Sierra County utilizes group supervision. Many times social workers work in teams with families. Teams allow two social workers with a knowledge of children and families to work together and collaborate. In the event there is no available social worker who has worked with the family, the supervisor could absorb cases as necessary, or could staff with another social worker to temporarily manage a case. Probation will also respond as circumstances allow, to requests to provide services to clients.</i>

Essential Function:	10. Alternative locations for operations
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County Health and Human Services has two office locations, Loyalton on the east side of the County and Downieville on the west side of the County. Both offices have access to computers and telephones. If staff does not have access to either of the office, there are portable laptops that can access CWS/CMS using the VPN. Both offices have back-up generators. In the event these offices are not available, services could be provided in any location identified by Health and Human Services or by the Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator or the EOC. Probation also has an office in Loyalton and one in Downieville.</i>
Essential Function:	11. Orientation and ongoing training
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County social workers are required to attend a yearly training in shelter operations from the American Red Cross. They are required to complete online training on the Incident Command System and California Health Alert Network. There are bi-monthly emergency preparedness meetings with local businesses, health care providers, law enforcement and other entities. Social workers are encouraged to attend these meetings. Social workers and probation officers are required to maintain active CPR cards and training is offered by Sierra County.</i>
<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria B:</b>	<b>Respond, as appropriate, to new child welfare cases in areas adversely affected by a disaster, and provide services in those cases:</b>
Essential Function:	1. Investigation process
Process Description:	<i>New child welfare investigations will be conducted in accordance with State and Federal law. Social workers will work closely with law enforcement to respond promptly to referrals on children in need of child protective services in disaster situations. Local emergency officials and Incident Command will be consulted in any disaster situations where the responding social worker's safety needs to be taken into consideration. Social workers will continue to use tools such as Structured Decision Making (SDM), to screen, prioritize and assign suspected child abuse and neglect reports.</i>

Essential Function:	2. Determine circumstances surrounding the child’s potential entrance
Process Description:	<i>Social workers will provide care for an unaccompanied child until the child could be returned to the parent or a suitable placement is found. If an unaccompanied non-minor dependent is without care or shelter, the social worker or probation officer will make every effort to find a relative/NREFM or contact the FFA for placement prior to arranging for the youth to stay in the shelter alone until the parent(s) can be located. Social workers will utilize SDM and follow policy and procedures to determine the need for placing a child in out of home care. All decisions will be staffed with their supervisor. If the supervisor is not available, staff will discuss this with the assistant director or director of Health and Human Services. In an effort to maintain family and safety, if approved by Health and Human Services, the parent(s) may be allowed to make a voluntary plan for the children to go to another caregiver. Social workers would continue to check in with the alternative caregiver to ensure safety is maintained. After the disaster has been neutralized, the social worker will again meet with the family to assess the situation. If a child would need immediate removal, the social worker would attempt to locate a relative/NREFM for placement. If a relative/NREFM was not available, the social worker would contact an FFA. The Court would be notified through appropriate disaster communication procedures.</i>
Essential Function:	3. Implementation process for providing new services
Process Description:	<i>Social workers would make every effort to provide services immediately with no barriers; however, due to the disaster, services that might normally be provided may not be available. An attempt would be made to identify appropriate substitute services until more formalized services are made available. The need for mental health services will be assessed. Behavioral Health professionals will be available to triage immediate needs. Because all Health and Human Services programs are involved in Emergency Response, eligibility workers are trained and will be available to provide disaster food stamps. Probation officers will provide services to new clients as directed by the Court or as deemed necessary by on-duty officer assessment.</i>

Essential Function:	4. Services emphasizing reunification due to disaster
Process Description:	<i>While maintaining safety and the Welfare and Institution Code (WIC), Sierra County social workers will assess the appropriateness of increasing visitation or providing over night visitation with parents who are outside of the disaster area, or requesting change of placement to allow the children to be placed closer to their parents. Every effort to continue providing services is important. If services are not available, social workers will make the effort to identify other appropriate services or service substitute if you will. The Court would be notified through appropriate disaster communication procedures. Social workers and probation officers will ensure all needs of children and parents are met within the limitations of the disaster.</i>
<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria C:</b>	<b>Address and provide care for unaccompanied minors and unaccompanied non-minor dependents:</b>
Essential Function:	1. Structure – child welfare personnel
Process Description:	<i>Social workers are required to respond and assist with setting up shelter operations in the event of a disaster. Social Workers will provide care for an unaccompanied child until the child could be returned to the parent or a suitable placement is found. If an unaccompanied non-minor dependent is without care or shelter, the social worker or probation officer will make every effort to find a relative/NREFM or contact the FFA for placement prior to arranging for the youth to stay in the shelter alone until the parent(s) can be located. Should the parent not be located following the stabilization of a disaster, following WIC, Health and Human Services would take appropriate measures to provide foster care for the child.</i>
Essential Function:	2. Address language barriers to communicate quickly and effectively
Process Description:	<i>Forms and brochures used for case management will be made available in other languages and distributed as appropriate. Sierra County has a list of individuals in which MOUs are utilized for translation and will make every effort to locate a translator. If no translator is available and telephone access is available, language line can be utilized. In the event no one is available to translate and telephone systems are down, every effort will be made to make the individual or family comfortable until arrangements can be made for translation, or Red Cross resources are available.</i>

Essential Function:	3. Determine likelihood of reunification and steps toward reunification
Process Description:	<i>During a disaster, it is even more important children are reunified with their parents. While maintaining safety and following WIC, Sierra County social workers will assess the appropriateness of children having visits with parents and/or extended family members who are outside of the disaster area. A request for change of placement in our out of the county to allow the children to be placed closer to their parents may be made. Every effort to continue providing services is important. If services are not available, social workers will make an effort to identify other appropriate services or service substitute if you will. Social workers and probation officers will continue to monitor child and placements for possible medical, educational and behavioral needs. Social workers and probation officers will ensure all needs of children and parents are met within the constraints of the disaster. They will maintain regular contact with relatives/NREFMs or foster parents and the children as well as the parents and/or extended family. By maintaining contact with all parties, social workers and probation officers will be able to remain informed themselves as well as notify parents and/or children of any moves. The Court would be notified of any placement change or request for reunification through appropriate disaster communication procedures.</i>
Essential Description:	4. Assess and make a determination within 30 days
Process Description:	<i>Social workers and probation officers will coordinate with Sierra County EOC regarding the status of all unaccompanied minors and reunification efforts. Standard policies and procedures will continue within mandated time frames. Should the parent not be located following the stabilization of a disaster, following WIC, Health and Human Services would take appropriate measures to provide foster care for the child.</i>
<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria D:</b>	<b>Remain in communication with caseworkers and other essential child welfare personnel who are displaced because of a disaster:</b>
Essential Function:	1. Communication structure – staff
Process Description:	<i>There are two satellite telephones for use by Social Services. There is a telephone tree to contact all employees of Sierra County Health and Human Services. The telephone tree can also be used so staff can be contacted to check on their status. Should a staff member become displaced, their safety and well being is foremost. They would be provided any services available to other Sierra County residents. If they are able to assist in above described duties and request, they may do so.</i>

Essential Function:	2. Communication structure – child welfare personnel (phone tree)
Process Description:	<i>The Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator has a major role in emergency and disaster preparedness for the County and has developed procedures for communication in a disaster or other emergency. There are two satellite telephones for use by Social Services. There is a telephone tree to contact all employees of Sierra County Health and Human Services. The telephone tree can also be used so staff can be contacted to check on their status and provide work instructions from their supervisor. Department telephone lines have password protected voicemail. Messages may be left by administration for individuals which can be retrieved and voicemail messages can be changed remotely from any outside telephone to provide information for any person calling into a staff telephone. Sierra County Health and Human Services uses AT&amp;T for telephone systems. Some staff members have cell phones issued by the Department or they can use individual residential and cell phones through various service providers.</i>
Essential Function:	3. Communication structure – contracted services
Process Description:	<i>The Health Department Emergency Preparedness Coordinator has prepared for the contact of Sierra County contracted entities. Social Services will follow the procedures they have created to provide for outside communication. The two satellite telephones may be utilized for the purpose of contacting contracted agencies or individuals. There is an emergency response telephone tree which includes contracted Sierra County Health and Human Services personnel.</i>
Essential Function:	4. Communication process when all normal channels are unavailable
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County Social Services has access to two satellite telephones through the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator. The Sierra County website can be used for communication in a disaster. The Social Services on call vehicle has a radio that can be used to stay in communication with law enforcement and other Sierra County departments that have radios. Probation officers have vehicles equipped with Sheriff's Department radios.</i>
Essential Function:	5. Communication frequency
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County Health and Human Services will communicate with staff, clients and other agencies as necessary.</i>

Essential Function:	6. Communication with media
Process Description:	<i>Inquiries from the media about Sierra County Health and Human Services or Sierra County will be directed to the assigned authority. Probation will be handled by the Agency Director or Assistant Director.</i>
Essential Function:	7. Communication with volunteers
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County Social Services will work with the Red Cross while they coordinate volunteers and other County Staff as needed for shelter operations.</i>
Essential Function:	8. Establishment of a toll-free number prior to disaster (include TTY)
Process Description:	<i>There is no toll-free number for Sierra County Health and Human Services. The Sierra County Sheriff's Office has a toll-free recorded information line: 1-888-274-3743. They have a Dispatch line: 530-289-3700. It is answered 24/7. It is also the line that the public calls, after hours, to report child abuse or neglect.</i>
<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria E:</b>	<b>Preserve essential program records:</b>
<b>Essential Function:</b>	1. Record preservation process
<b>Process Description:</b>	<i>Social Services and Probation have hard copies of all case files. Essential program records are also stored in the statewide database, CWS/CMS. Copies of Court orders in Child Protective Services and Probation cases are also kept at the Sierra County Superior Court in Downieville. The Chief Probation Officer has a laptop to access the probation computer system. Archived documents are stored at a facility in Iron Mountain, Nevada.</i>
<b>Essential Function:</b>	2. Use of off-site back-up system
<b>Process Description:</b>	<i>The CWS/CMS system can be remotely accessed by a laptop computer with VPN access.</i>

<b>CWS Disaster Response Criteria F:</b>	<b>Coordinate services and share information with other states and counties, include a description of the process utilized by the county to ensure that information regarding children placed pursuant to the Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (ICPC) occurs with both the sending state and CDSS:</b>
Essential Function:	1. Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children reporting process must include a process that disseminates information to both the sending state and CDSS
Process Description:	<i>Each child placed in Sierra County through ICPC is assigned a social worker who meets with the child and the placement a minimum of one time a month. The above mentioned expectations for location of children on a social workers case load will include children in Sierra County through ICPC. The Social Worker Supervisor is the ICPC Administrator for Sierra County and has knowledge and access to information as well. Any information and updates will be provided both the CDSS ICPC as well as any identified social services professional in the sending State. Every effort will be made to allow contact between the child and their parent and/or extended family members if the sending State approves.</i>
Essential Function:	2. Mental health providers
Process Description:	<i>Social Services staff will contact the Sierra County Behavioral Health Department to request a mental health professional to respond for a child having a mental health crisis. Behavioral Health professionals will be available to triage immediate needs.</i>
Essential Function:	3. Courts
Process Description:	<i>The County EOC is located in Downieville and will coordinate services with the Sierra County Superior Court.</i>
Essential Function:	4. Federal partners
Process Description:	<i>The CDSS will be responsible for coordinating services and sharing information with Federal partners</i>

Essential Function:	5. CDSS
Process Description:	<i>The County EOC will coordinate services with CDSS.</i>
Essential Function:	6. Tribes
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County does not have any Federally registered tribes. Sierra County social workers will follow ICWA requirements in the case of a placement involving a child that possibly has a tribal affiliation.</i>
Essential Function:	7. Volunteers
Process Description:	<i>Sierra County Social Services will work with the Red Cross while they coordinate volunteers and other County Staff as needed for shelter operations.</i>