



## Office of Children and Family Services

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE  
Acting Commissioner

December 2015

Dear Provider:

This letter is being sent to clarify two important issues that impact a small number of **child day care centers and school-age child care programs that operate in public school buildings**. The two issues concern the following Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) regulatory requirements: (1) notifying parents of primary and secondary emergency evacuation sites, and (2) having a variety of food and water/liquids on site to be accessed if a program was forced to remain overnight, due to a local disaster. These two issues are discussed below.

### Notifying Parents of Primary and Secondary Evacuation Sites

In developing the regulations, OCFS researched national approaches dealing with the reunification of children with families after disasters. Based on the recommendations from Homeland Security, the Federal Emergency Management Administration, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, American Red Cross, and Missing and Exploited Children, OCFS added the requirement that programs make parents aware of their primary and secondary relocation sites in the event of evacuation and/or relocation due to an emergency situation. For most programs located in public schools, this has not been an issue because they operate either before school or after school as distinct programs from the school program and, as such, they have separate emergency plans. In a few cases, however, when a school-age child care program or child care center uses the same relocation sites as the school, the school-age child care program or child care center has been instructed by the public school administration not to share the relocation site information. The State Education Department (SED) confirmed for OCFS that this information is confidential and may not be shared with parents.

OCFS and SED have partnered to resolve this issue. The resolution allows child day care programs to choose one of the following two plans.

1. Develop an emergency relocation plan that meets the needs of the child care community. The plan may be distinct from the school's emergency plan. Share information about the emergency locations with parents and the principal. This meets the OCFS regulatory requirement.
2. Continue to plan with the school and take advantage of its resources in times of need. Share the plan with parents and educate parents on how to access information from emergency services on where their children will be taken, should an emergency occur. This plan meets regulation because public schools follow direction from emergency services when relocation is needed and regulation states that when emergency services direct a program to an emergency relocation site, the program must notify parents as soon as possible.

If neither of the above seems appropriate for your program, please contact your licensor or registrar to work through the details and discuss other possible options.

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## Food Storage for Emergency Situations

The second issue involves storing food for emergency situations requiring programs to remain in place at the school overnight. Again, most programs operating in public schools have worked to resolve these issues of storage or access to school resources in a local emergency. There are a small number of programs that have yet to find a plan that works to meet the regulation. OCFS discussed this matter with SED as well. Together, we have the following recommendations:

1. Continue to work with the public school administration to identify space that would allow the child care center or school-age child care program to store enough dry goods (healthy snack bars, crackers etc.) for an overnight stay. Perhaps the use of a rubber/plastic bin with a lock could serve as a storage container for the child care program. Since most schools are on municipal water lines, storage of additional water or beverages may not be needed.
2. Inquire as to the possibility of using a separate kitchen storage area or other storage for an overnight supply of dry goods.

In a federally declared disaster, the American Red Cross or other authorized agency would be given access to food stored in schools and the school-age program or child care center would be served. Programs would need to contact 911 or the American Red Cross for assistance, should a school-age child care program or child care center be trapped in the school without long-term provisions.

For more information on emergency preparedness, consider taking the online OCFS-approved e-Learning course titled: *Emergency Preparedness* at: [https://www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu/elearn\\_catalog.shtm](https://www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu/elearn_catalog.shtm). One-and-a-half hours of training will be credited in the following regulatory topics: Principles of Childhood Development, Child Day Care Program Development, and Safety and Security Procedures.

Thank you for your efforts to keep children safe.

Sincerely,



Janice M. Molnar, Ph.D.  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Child Care Services