

Klamath County Public Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Preparedness Month: Help children cope with potential disasters

KLAMATH FALLS, Ore. – September is National Preparedness Month and Klamath County Public Health officials encourage residents to think about how to help children cope in a disaster.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have a number of resources available on this topic at <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html> .

Setting a good example for your children by managing your stress through healthy lifestyle choices, such as eating healthy, exercising regularly, getting plenty of sleep, and avoiding drugs and alcohol, is critical for parents and caregivers. When you are prepared, rested, and relaxed you can respond better to unexpected events and can make decisions in the best interest of your family and loved ones.

The following tips can help reduce stress before, during, and after a disaster or traumatic event.

Before

- Talk to your children so that they know you are prepared to keep them safe.
- Review safety plans before a disaster or emergency happens. Having a plan will increase your children's confidence and help give them a sense of control.

During

- Stay calm and reassure your children.
- Talk to children about what is happening in a way that they can understand. Keep it simple and appropriate for each child's age.

After

- Provide children with opportunities to talk about what they went through or what they think about it. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions.
- You can help your children feel a sense of control and manage their feelings by encouraging them to take action directly related to the disaster. For example, children can help others after a disaster, including volunteering to help community or family members in a safe environment. Children should NOT participate in disaster cleanup activities for health and safety reasons.
- It is difficult to predict how some children will respond to disasters and traumatic events. Because parents, teachers, and other adults see children in different situations, it is important for them to work together to share information about how each child is coping after a traumatic event.

It is important for families to have an emergency plan in place. If there is a child with special healthcare needs in your family, you and your family can prepare by developing a written emergency care plan and practicing your plan.

For example, a plan can include medicines or assistance devices, such as objects that instill a sense of calm and comfort, that your child needs. If possible, let your child help make the plan. Healthcare providers can work with families of children with special healthcare needs to make sure the child's needs are covered in the family emergency plan and to identify support networks in your community.