

*The following is a list of disaster preparedness and post-disaster assessment questions compiled by the North Carolina Partnership for Children. EdNC asked how the organization was learning from its Helene response. The questions might be useful for other state-level early childhood organizations, support agencies, and child care programs.*

### **Immediate Safety & Communication**

1. Safety: Is our staff safe and accounted for? Are those we support safe and accounted for?
2. Communication: How quickly were we able to establish communication with local partnerships? What communication channels worked? Which failed?
3. Information Flow: Does my organization have what they need to communicate with families and providers (templates, talking points, hotlines, translated materials)?
4. Coordination: Who are our designated points of contact for state emergency management, DSS, DCDEE, public health, and FEMA?
5. Do providers and local partnerships clearly understand where and how to report damages (e.g., Disaster Impact Reports), and are they receiving hands-on support to do so?
6. Are communication expectations clear about what information is required, by whom, and by when, to avoid confusion and duplication?
7. Are providers being contacted through multiple channels (email, CCR&R outreach, office hours, regional meetings) rather than relying on a single portal or message?

### **Emergency Planning, Training & Practice**

8. Do child care programs have up-to-date written emergency preparedness and response plans that address multiple hazards (evacuation, shelter-in-place, lockdown, reunification)?
9. Have emergency plans been practiced through drills and documented?
10. Have staff (including substitutes) received Emergency Preparedness & Response (EPR) training?
11. Did the disaster reveal gaps in plans or drills that now need revision? Are updated plans being re-tested after revisions?

### **Assessing Impact**

12. Damage Assessment: What is the status of child care facilities — open, closed, damaged, lost?
13. Infrastructure: Are essential utilities (power, water, internet, transportation) functioning in affected counties?
14. Provider Needs: What immediate needs do early childhood educators and child care programs report (supplies, space, staffing, funding, mental health support)?
15. Family Needs: What are the urgent needs of families with young children (shelter, diapers, formula, medical care, transportation, food security)?
16. Are we asking providers for information only once, or are multiple agencies requesting overlapping data?

17. Can local partnerships, CCR&Rs, or state agencies aggregate estimates to reduce provider burnout?
18. Are we distinguishing between:
  - physical damage,
  - lost revenue,
  - workforce impacts,
  - and longer-term sustainability risks?
19. Are we tracking which closures are likely permanent versus temporarily paused?

### **Supporting Child Care Providers**

20. Temporary Solutions: Do providers need temporary spaces (churches, schools, community centers)?
21. Financial Support: How quickly can emergency stabilization funding reach providers?
22. Staff Well-being: What immediate mental health or trauma-informed support can we offer early educators, family support professionals, etc.?
23. Are providers connected to a Child Care Health Consultant (CCHC) for guidance during response and recovery?

### **Equity & Accessibility**

24. Language Access: Are communications available in accessible formats (e.g., for families with disabilities)?
25. Equity Check: Are we prioritizing support for the most vulnerable populations (low-income families, rural communities, families with special needs)?

### **Data & Documentation**

26. Data Collection: How are we tracking damage, needs, and response efforts for reporting and future planning? Is it centralized and consistent with others doing similar work?

### **Partnerships & Collaboration**

27. Community Partners: Which local organizations (faith-based, nonprofits, businesses) can help provide resources, temporary spaces, services, etc.?
28. Cross-Sector Coordination: Are we aligned with schools, health systems, and emergency management on family and child care needs?

### **Funding & Policy**

29. Emergency Funding: What state or federal emergency funds are available, and how quickly can they be accessed? Do we understand the complexities of accessing government funding and do we want to take on that responsibility?
30. Policy Adjustments: Do we need temporary waivers for licensing, ratios, or other regulations to maintain care?

### **Workforce Stability & Provider/Market Stability**

31. How is the disaster impacting early educator retention, turnover, and compensation?

32. Are workforce supports (e.g., WAGE\$, bonuses, dislocated worker programs) reaching: centers *and* family child care homes? All impacted counties?
33. Are relief strategies addressing root workforce challenges, not just short-term fixes?
34. Are we tracking how policy changes (e.g., end of hold-harmless provisions) are exacerbating workforce losses during recovery?
35. Are disaster impacts compounding pre-existing fragility in the child care market?
36. Are we identifying “lead” or “anchor” programs whose closure would destabilize entire communities?
37. Are temporary licenses, reopening pathways, or technical assistance helping rebuild supply quickly enough?

### **Long-Term Recovery**

38. Rebuilding: What is the timeline and plan for restoring damaged facilities?
39. Mental Health: How will we provide ongoing trauma-informed care for children, families, and staff?
40. Preparedness: What changes should we make to our disaster preparedness plans based on this experience? What infrastructure has been compromised or missing? (i.e. generators, backups, etc.)
41. Lessons Learned: What worked well and what didn’t? How will we document this for future preparedness?
42. Are after-action reviews being conducted to assess what worked and what didn’t?
43. Are emergency preparedness efforts being embedded into ongoing quality improvement, not just crisis response?
44. Are early childhood needs fully integrated into broader disaster recovery and economic recovery efforts?
45. Are state and federal partners aligned on expectations, timelines, and allowable uses of funds?
46. Is there a standing structure (like the task force) for ongoing coordination beyond one disaster?