



# Family-Centered Practices During a Catastrophe

**When catastrophic events occur help-giving professionals may need to be more intentional about attuning to the priorities and preferences of the family. During traumatic times, make sure you are:**

## Being Flexible and Available

Families may need a different type of support than you usually provide, and they may need it intermittently as their situation evolves. When families are concerned about their basic needs, they may not be in a position to have a visit focused on child learning outcomes. Respect the family's current priorities, and be available when and where needed.

## Empowering Families

Help families identify their priorities and make decisions that best suits their families. Using a coaching interaction style ensures the family's priorities are foregrounded. Help families identify their option and make decisions that match their preferences. Help families re-establish a sense of control by helping them identify concrete next steps and respecting their decisions.

## Helping Families Make Informed Decisions

Provide families with information about resources, how trauma effects family systems, and how trauma can effect development. Help families determine how they want to use the information and respect their decision.

## Talking to Families Before Conducting a Visit

Finding out from families what they need and when a visit is convenient will help you be ready to support their evolving priorities.

## Being Culturally Responsive

Respect the cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds of families. Families that have been historically marginalized or taken advantage of may not trust traditional help-giving practices. Don't assume you know what is best for families. Find out what type of support the family prefers right now and respect their decision.

## Presuming Competence

Most families have systems in place to deal with resource shortfalls and unexpected situations. Although natural catastrophes are each unique, trust and respect that families have the strength and ability to overcome the challenges.

## Respecting Boundaries

Families may be displaced and not willing to have a visit in their temporary home or community location. Talk to families about when and where they would like services to occur without putting pressure on them to meet system timelines.

## Supporting Comprehensive and Integrated Services

Families may have additional needs for all the family members. The well-being of the whole family supports the developmental progress of the young child. Help families find and coordinate all the services they may need for their family members.

