

# GSA Child Care Let's Be Ready

## Emergency Communication

### How do you communicate with families in an emergency?

GSA recommends having an off-site phone number to relay information to par-ents. In an emergency, it may be easier to call outside of the impacted area so we suggest out-of-state. You call the number to alert them of your evacuation and again when you reach your evacuation site. Parents also call this same number to obtain information. It is possible that cell service will go down so plan on using landlines. (See Out-of-State Emergency Contact Tool #3)

You should also consider a *secondary* means of communication. Do you already use social media, such Twitter or Facebook? Social media can be an effective way to communicate with families in real-time.

#### Practice, practice, practice!

##### Out of State Relay Number

- Call the emergency number at least every other month. Positions turnover so make sure the receiving center is informed and ready to assist.
- Ask parents to also practice calling the number.
- Arrange actual drills where you call with the evacuation notice and others call to get updates.

##### Social Media

- If any system is only used during an emergency, then it may not work.
- Even your secondary means of communication must be used regularly if it is going to be of any value.
- Regularly post center updates and news to reach families and get every one comfortable using social media.

### Have you also considered Social Media?



Within private groups you can instantly post updates from your cell and track who has seen your post. Some centers regularly use private groups for each classroom to post reminders, activities, photos and share news. It's a great way to link parents to each other and make connections to the classroom.

#### You control who sees your group and its content.

It is highly recommended you set any group to "Secret": Only mem-bers can see a secret group, who's in it, and what members post. You would create the group and add individuals.

#### What are the privacy options for groups?

Consider different privacy options for groups: Open, Closed and Secret.

#### How do I know who's seen each post or message in a group?

Some features marked as "seen" after your group members have seen them.

A checkmark under each post indicates how many group members have seen it. This way you can stay updated on the group's activity.

Hover over the ✓ to see who has seen it. Anyone who can view the group post will see the ✓. Keep in mind that if people see a group post or message, it doesn't always mean they had the chance to read it carefully.

Choose the communication method that works best for you and your child care center community. The important message is that you need a plan for how you can reach your families in all emergencies. And practice, practice, practice!