

Determining Need for SAFE Infant Feeding Support

(Or, How to Decide If You Need to Deploy)

If there has been a disaster or other emergency in your area, use these questions to determine how much and what kinds of support are needed. Keep in mind that needs will be uneven. Some families will be fine and have no needs, and others may have nothing. You want to find and support the families whose needs have not yet been met. Once you have learned more, use the “Levels of Support” overview on the last page to help you decide what to do.

NOTE - Do not rely solely on reports from agencies, shelters, or people outside the area to tell you what needs exist. Our volunteers did not discover the degree of needs families were experiencing until a couple of IBCLCs from near Asheville started visiting distribution sites and talking with families. We consistently found that other organizations told us families did not have support needs, and our volunteers uncovered needs in the same families.

If you would like support learning how to meet these needs or would like additional help, please reach out to the SAFE team at info@safeinfantfeeding.org or **828-809-3301**

You do NOT have to answer all of these questions. Keep gathering information until you can determine how much need exists. The last page shows possible levels of response.

General Need

- About how many families with children under 3 years old live in the impacted area? Who is paying attention to the needs of families with babies?
If the answer is no one, or you are not sure, your group may need to take responsibility.
- How many homes have been damaged or destroyed? How many families are displaced? How many displaced families are still residing in or near the impacted area?
 - Where are displaced families living? Shelters? Hotels? Campers? Tents? With relatives or friends?
- How is the healthcare infrastructure? Are the local hospitals and healthcare practices open regular hours? Is WIC operating normally?
- What is the water situation?
 - How many families are without reliable access to clean water? Of the families with clean water, what percentage need to obtain bottled water frequently?
 - Is there a boil water advisory? Can all families boil water easily with the resources they have access to?

- How are families being educated about safe drinking water, cleaning feeding equipment, etc?
- What is the situation with electricity?
 - Do all families have access to electricity?
 - Are all families able to cook or boil water?
 - Do all families have access to refrigeration for human milk/ formula storage?
- What is the situation with heat/AC?
 - Are all families able to safely and appropriately heat or cool the place where they are living?

Displaced Family Needs

- How are families with young children being supported by shelters to support their needs (privacy, play area)?
- Are shelters set up so families can clean infant feeding items in a place other than a bathroom?

Infant Feeding Needs

- What resources are available for families regarding breastfeeding, bottle feeding, formula feeding? Are usual local resources available and functioning?
 - Is lactation support available?
 - Is support for formula feeding or mixed feeding families available?
 - Are clean pumps available?
 - Do all sites know that continuing established breastfeeding is not just possible, but preferable in an emergency?
 - Do local shelters and distribution sites know how to find these resources?
- Are distribution sites and shelters receiving donations of infant formula?** *(They almost certainly are, even in a minor emergency.)*
 - Are they checking expiration dates?
 - Are they storing it properly? (No extreme temperatures, keeping it clean)
 - Are they removing non-infant feeding items from the infant feeding area?
- If safe water is not reliably available, are shelters and distribution sites prioritizing ready to feed formula in single-serve bottles, especially for infants under 6 months old?
- Are sites distributing unsafe infant feeding products, such as used pump parts, opened formula, etc?
- What is happening with human milk sharing? *(You may need to dig a bit for this)* Can it be done more safely?

Levels of Response

Level 1 - Mass/Public Education

When appropriate:

Before an expected incident, preparation/planning, small-scale emergencies without shelters or distribution sites, micro-emergencies. Water and power are reliable, or people are dealing with short-term disruptions in their own homes (eg, a boil water advisory for an area while power is unaffected, a winter storm warning asking people to stay home but power may go out, etc)

Provide education via social media, posters, announcements, educating responders, and similar methods. Education of caregivers or families 1-1 is accomplished through usual routes of interaction such as clinician visits, phone calls, etc. Ideally, coordinate with local media, the local public information officer, or influential organizations to disseminate easy to understand information with simple action steps more widely than you can reach on your own.

Level 2 - Individual Deployment

Small-scale emergencies with few shelters or distribution sites, micro-emergencies. Water and/or power are unreliable in some locations, some damage to homes or displaced families, or people are dealing with short-term disruptions in their own homes. Alternately, can be ongoing to support locations such as food banks, shelters for women, families, or unhoused people, and similar support services for low-resource families.

Continue Level 1 education efforts. In addition, one person will visit individual shelters, points of distribution, or service sites to offer help and support for families with children under age 3.

Level 3 - Informal Small Group Response

Small-scale emergencies which have some shelters or distribution sites, micro-emergencies, or continuing support after winding down a larger organized response. Water and/or power are unreliable in more locations, more people have damaged homes or are displaced, or people are dealing with longer-term disruptions in their own homes. Alternately, may be ongoing to help support services for low-resource families.

Continue Level 1 education efforts. In addition, individuals or pairs will visit shelters, points of distribution, or service sites to offer help and support for families with children under age 3. Volunteers will share information and may track details about visits in a central location. There may or may not be sharing of resources. See “Deploying as an Individual or Small Group.”

Level 4 - Organized Response

Larger emergencies which have open shelters and multiple distribution sites. Water and/or power are unreliable in many locations, and many people have experienced damage to their homes or are displaced, and others have disruptions in their own homes.

Continue Level 1 education while deploying a more formal response. This will generally involve a Boots on the Ground Coordinator and Digital Coordinators to help manage volunteers and information. Needs funding and/or donations to provide resources.