Emergency Preparedness in Families with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs)

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CURRENT PROBLEM

There exists a limited amount of research on best practices and recommendations for children with ASD and their families regarding preparation and management for disasters. The purpose of this review is to prevent an environmental scan on the evidence in the literature and professional standards and guidelines for emergency preparedness in families with children with ASDs

NATURAL DISASTERS

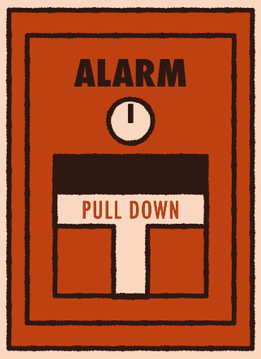
398

Number of recorded natural disasters in 2024

WHY IS IT A PROBLEM?

LACK OF PREPARATION

- Families are not prepared to handle various disasters
- Lakc of resources available for the unique needs of children with ASD and their families in the event of a disaster



LACK OF ADVOCACY

- Little research has been done in the last 5 years regarding disaster preparedness for children with ASD and their families
- Lack of advocacy in legislation has also been noted for this issue

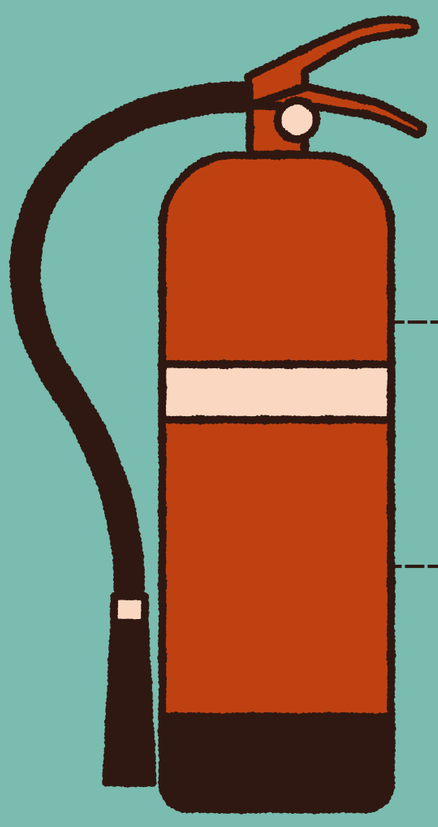
LACK OF EQUITY

- Solutions for disaster preparedness may not work for children with ASD who have specific needs
- Need more equitable and adaptive solutions to support children with ASD and their families in disasters

LACK OF RESEARCH

- Out of 453 articles, only 9 were related to disaster preparedness for individuals with ASD or other developmental or mental health conditions
- Few organizations provide information on the topic

HOW CAN YOU HELP?



Advocate locally for more equitable solutions for disaster preparedness for children with ASDs and their families

Educate yourself on the needs of children with ASDs and get acquainted with the resources available in your area

Create support groups and networks among families with children with ASDs

EMERGENCY SAFETY TIPS FOR CHILDREN WITH ASDS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Have a plan in place including copies of vital documents and a meeting place

Make sure children with special needs and disabilities have a medical identification bracelet with up to date contact information

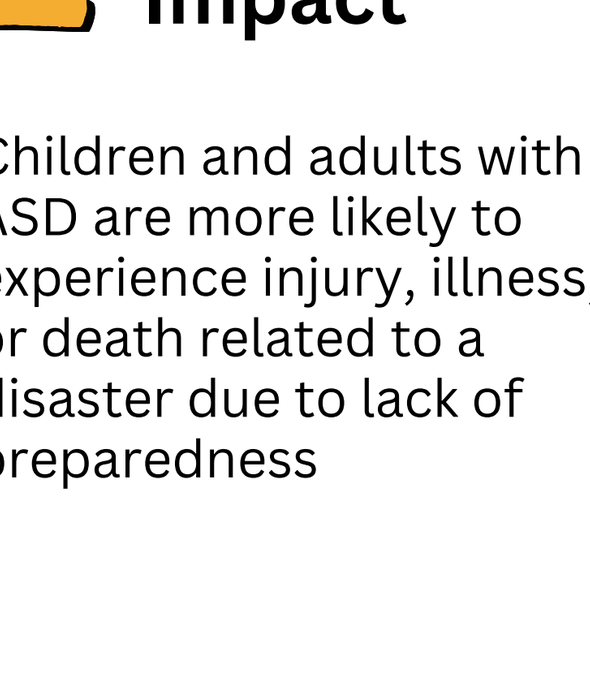
Become familiar with local resources in preparation for an emergency, and work with your child to understand and trust emergency personnel

5 Findings on emergency preparedness for children with ASDs and their families

1 Emotional Impact

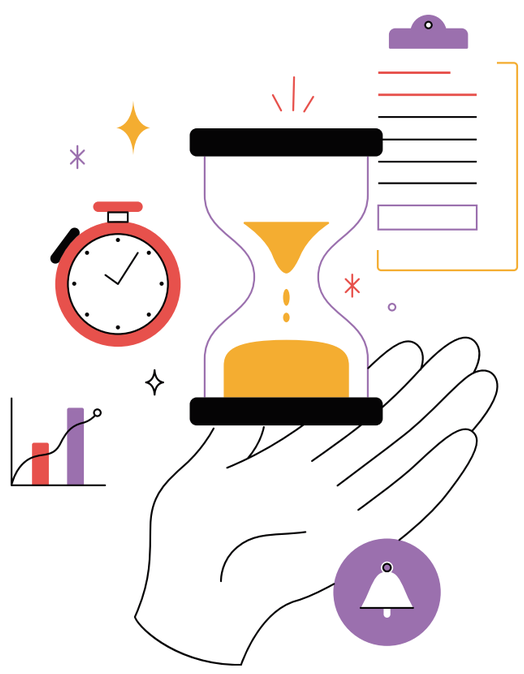
Literature has found that a lack of emergency and disaster preparedness can lead to negative emotional impacts.

Children with ASD and other mental health conditions may have an increase in negative behaviors



2 Physical Impact

Children and adults with ASD are more likely to experience injury, illness, or death related to a disaster due to lack of preparedness



3 Lack of Preparedness

Families lack the resources and accesibility to prepared themselves and their children for a disaster

Some families note that they are unaware of what is available to them in the event of a disaster, and how to utilize said resources

4 Lack of Equity

Currently available resources for disaster preparedness do not account for the unique needs of children with ASD and their families in the event of a disaster

Examples include evacuation sites and access to services such as therapy

5 Need for Advocacy

Continued advocacy is required to reduce the disparities faced by children with ASD and their families in the event of a disaster due to lack of preparedness

Legislators need to consider education and equitable standards for preparedness for this population

The Carolyn E. Wylie Center

Partners for Better Health

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Azusa Pacific University

References