

Appendix E: Reunification Tips for Families

The following tips can be shared with families to help them prepare and reduce separation time during emergencies:

1. Make a Backpack Emergency Card

- Place a card in your child's school bag with their name, parent/guardian contact information, an out-of-state contact, and any medical needs.
- [CDC Backpack Emergency Card Template](#)

2. Talk With Your Child's School About Reunification

- Ask about the school or childcare center's reunification plan.
- If one does not exist, request that the district create one.

3. Plan for Children with Special Health Care Needs

- Ensure they carry medical identification and written instructions (allergies, medications, or health conditions).
- Consider preparing a small "go-kit" with essential supplies in case separation lasts longer than expected.

4. Teach Children Identifiable Information

- As soon as they are old enough, teach your child their first and last name, parents' names, phone numbers, and the name/number of an out-of-state contact.

5. Create a Family Password

- Choose a unique word or phrase only your family knows.
- Teach children to only go with adults who can provide this password.

6. Establish Safe Places to Meet

- Select a family meeting place other than your home, such as a trusted neighbor's house or a familiar landmark.
- At large public events, identify a visible meeting spot as soon as you arrive and write your phone number on a bracelet, lanyard, or tag.

7. Practice Conversations with Your Children

- Rehearse what they should do if separated (for example: "find someone in charge, share your name, stay put until we find you").
- Keep conversations calm and age-appropriate so children feel prepared rather than fearful.

8. Plan for Communication During Disasters

- Use text messaging when phone calls may not go through.
- Designate an out-of-state contact who can serve as a family check-in point.
- Follow only trusted sources (law enforcement, school district, Red Cross) for reunification updates.

9. Keep Updated Photos and Identification

- Carry a recent photo of your child on your phone and in your wallet.

- Save digital copies of IDs (licenses, passports, medical cards) in a secure location and keep hard copies outside your home.

10. Know What to Do if a Child is Lost

- Contact local law enforcement immediately and provide detailed information about your child (age, height, eye/hair color, clothing).
- If a Family Reunification Center is opened:
 - Families will be notified through official channels such as city alerts, social media, local news, or 211/311 hotlines.
 - Parents/guardians should bring identification, and any documentation needed for verification, including:
 - Driver's License or government ID
 - Birth certificate (if available)
 - Documentation of guardianship, if applicable
 - Any relevant medical information