Planning for Emergencies Away from Your Program

Use this reflection activity to think about how you would respond to problems on trips away from the home. Print the activity. Answer the questions. Talk about your responses with your trainer, coach or family child care administrator.

Your family child care home is located within a neighborhood. Several of the children in your care live in this neighborhood and their families walk them to and from the program. Jerusha, a preschool child, came to your home very upset this morning and has not cheered up. As part of your activity plan, you are going on a walk around the block this morning. You and the children walk around the block to look at the nests birds have built in the trees. The children are so excited; you take turns lifting children to see into the nest. You take a headcount before beginning to walk again, but your count is one child short. You see Jerusha is no longer with the group. You suspect Jerusha has started walking toward her house (or where she thinks her house is).

1. How do you respond to Jerusha’s disappearance?

 Quickly scan the area. If you do not see Jerusha, she is at serious risk, and you must take immediate action.

2. What is your plan for notifying authorities that a child is missing?

 If you cannot see the child, you must notify authorities (police, security police). Use the cell phone you brought with you. Provide the child’s name and address. They will send a patrol to look for the child. Immediately after calling police, you must notify your service family child care administrator. They must be informed as soon as possible when a child is left unattended.

3. How do you maintain ratio and safely escort the rest of the children back to your home?

 Try to contact your back-up provider to have him or her come to the area and safely escort the children back to your child care home; it is best if you can stay in the location to continue looking for the child and to interact with the authorities.

 Keep all the other children close to you, perhaps they all must hold onto the wagon, stroller, or another item that helps you keep contact while you make the necessary phone calls.

 If you cannot stay in that particular location due to safety concerns for the other children (e.g., it is near a busy intersection), move to a safer spot, such as a nearby grassy lawn where it is easier to secure the other children.
You should also practice safety procedures with the children in your care ahead of time, such that in the event of an emergency, they know how to stay close to you so you can make important phone calls. Perhaps you teach the children a special word of phrase, such as “emergency help,” and what to do if you say this phrase, perhaps children sit around you and hold hands and stay quiet until you have made all the necessary phone calls.

After you have made all the necessary contacts, including notifying Jerusha’s parents, calmly explain to the other children what is going on and what you need from them to keep everyone safe.

4. What is your plan for notifying parents?

Call Jerusha’s family immediately after notifying authorities.

5. What can you do in the future to prevent such incidents?

Make sure you and any assistants are actively supervising at all times. On trips especially, you should not be so engrossed in activities that you cannot visually see all children at all times. In this case, you could have asked the other children to wait in a specific spot where you could simultaneously see all of them and make sure each had a chance to view the nest. Think about how you will keep all children safe and in your line of sight before stopping for a special experience. You can also recruit volunteers to assist on trips away from your home.

6. What other concerns do you have?

Prioritize responsive caregiving for Jerusha. Talk with her earlier in the day about her feelings. Find out what is wrong. Adapt your supervision to meet her needs. If she is angry or upset, stay close.

Your family child care program is on a field trip to a local nature preserve. Suddenly, Sheridan screams out and begins to cry. When you ask what's wrong, he says a bee stung him. His face begins to swell.

1. If you know Sheridan has an emergency action plan, what do you do?

Follow the instructions on the action plan. You should have his emergency medications (possibly an epinephrine injector such as EpiPen) in your field trip emergency kit. Follow directions. Follow his action plan for notifying parents and emergency medical services.

2. If Sheridan does not have an emergency action plan, what do you do?

This is a life-threatening event. Use your cell phone to call EMS immediately. Then notify Sheridan's parents.
In both cases:
Same as the first example, it is good to have a code word or phrase you can say to the children in your care to ensure their safety while you secure help for Sheridan. You should also practice safety procedures with the children in your care ahead of time such that in the event of an emergency away from your home they know how to stay close to you so you can make important phone calls and help the child in need. Perhaps you teach the children a special word of phrase such as “emergency help” and what to do, for example, sit around you, hold hands, and stay quiet until you have made all the necessary phone calls.

After you have made all the necessary contacts and while attending to Sheridan’s care, calmly explain to the other children what is going on and what you need from them to keep everyone safe.

Try to contact your backup provider to have her or him come to the area and safely escort the children back to your child care home; it is best if you can stay in the location to continue to care for Sheridan, and, as necessary, ride with him in the ambulance.