

MOUNTAIN STATES PEDIATRIC DISASTER COALITION

Like many areas of the country, the Mountain States region (MT, WY, ID, UT, & CO) faces unique challenges including a large geographic area of both densely populated urban communities and expansive rural areas. The pediatric population throughout this region exceeds national averages and, with only three children's hospitals in these five states, baseline healthcare services for children are often limited and distant. This challenge is magnified by the ever-present threat of natural and man-made disasters where a surge of pediatric patients could quickly overwhelm local capability. Much of the rural population is served only by critical access hospitals and lives hours away from dedicated pediatric resources.

In 2014, at the National Healthcare Coalition Preparedness Conference, the Mountain States Pediatric Disaster Coalition (MSPDC) established a multi-state network of hospitals, health care providers, state health departments, Healthcare Preparedness Programs, EMS for Children programs, emergency management professionals, and community groups to coordinate regional pediatric surge capacity and ensure effective use of critical resources in the event of a large-scale disaster affecting children in the Mountain States region. In the two years since its inception, the MSPDC has expanded its membership, established an online repository of region-specific resources, and clearly established best practices.

The successful implementation of a multi-state pediatric coalition permits a low cost organization to target the development of relationships, communication, and situational awareness vital to the safety of children during crises. MSPDC is a resource to hospitals, health departments, providers, government agencies, and professional societies that is aligned with existing healthcare infrastructure. Pediatric response assets and skills are scarce resources in the region, and they are now being organized to respond more quickly and effectively to an event.

Specific objectives:

- Improve regional pediatric disaster response by understanding regional pediatric surge capacity and capability
- Strengthen disaster-time communication by establishing relationships beforehand
- Augment the capability of non-pediatric providers/facilities to care for children in a disaster
- Promote pre-event planning for timely evacuation and appropriate transfer from incapacitated pediatric facilities

Methods employed to accomplish these objectives:

- Assess regional pediatric capacity & capability
- Maintain an online database of regional pediatric facilities and points of contact
- Maintain regular Coalition-wide communication (quarterly conference calls)

- Support pediatric emergency and disaster education
- Support working group activities as needs and interests arise
- Support annual in-person meeting in conjunction with NPDC Conference or NHCC Conference
- Support a region-wide pediatric disaster exercise every 3 years
- Establish inter-facility and inter-state agreements for pediatric patient transfer during a disaster

The mission of the MSPDC is to establish a network of healthcare facilities, pediatric providers, public health departments, emergency management professionals, and community groups to enhance regional pediatric surge capacity and capability, as well as to ensure the effective use of critical resources, in the event of a large-scale disaster or public health emergency affecting children.

Please contact the MSPDC Coordinator, Jim Howard, at mSPDC@hcahealthcare.com or 208-529-6223 for additional information.

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