

## Flood Aftermath: Helping Your Children

Floods bring stress to an entire family, but especially children. Their deep sense of vulnerability, lack of understanding and difficulty in communicating how they feel, make them particularly at risk in disaster situations. Below are suggestions for helping children through these difficult times:

- Speak simply and honestly about the situation. This helps avoid the fear of the unknown.
- Make time for your children. Just a moment of your time, a hug or a reassuring word may be all children need to feel more safe and secure in an emotional situation.
- Listen. Answer their questions as much as you can.
- Reassure them. Use statements like, "It's scary right now, but we'll always take care of you."
- Involve children. Let them help with the clean-up efforts. This helps them feel a part of the family and prepares them for later situations.
- As much as possible, maintain routines. This helps children feel stable and secure.
- Show love and support.
- Make sure children know the family's difficulties are not their fault. Children tend to blame themselves for problems.
- Take care of your own emotions and stress. Children will reflect your anxiety or your calm.
- Reassure children about the family's safety.
- Remember that during crises, children may revert to earlier behavior and act younger than they are. A child may be irritable or misbehave. This is normal for a child who is scared and doesn't understand a serious situation. Children need your extra patience at this time.

### Where to Turn for Help

The full force of emotional reactions often surface after the disaster has passed and the clean-up begins. A devastating feeling of helplessness is a normal reaction to a natural disaster, but sometimes the stress is so overwhelming that personal coping methods are not enough. You probably have a lot going on right now, but you don't have to do it alone. It's important to ask for help. You can contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at 1-800-462-9029 for help and resources.

### Resources Are Available

Additional information, self-help tools and other resources are available online at [www.MagellanHealth.com](http://www.MagellanHealth.com). Or call us for more information, help and support. Counselors are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week to provide confidential assistance at no cost to you.

