

MASS GATHERING

FAMILY EMERGENCY PLAN

Know the exits. Stay together when possible. Move away from danger early.

PURPOSE

This plan is written for families attending concerts, festivals, sporting events, fairs, parades, conventions, worship events, demonstrations, and other crowded public gatherings. It addresses crowd movement, severe weather, fire, violence, suspicious activity, lost family members, medical emergencies, and evacuation.

THE FAMILY PRIORITY ORDER

- 1 RECOGNIZE AND MOVE AWAY FROM DANGER**
- 2 MAINTAIN FAMILY ACCOUNTABILITY**
- 3 USE EXITS BEFORE CONGESTION BUILDS**
- 4 FOLLOW SECURITY AND RESPONDER DIRECTIONS**
- 5 REUNIFY ONLY IN A SAFE AREA**

ReadyParent Preparedness Series | Mass Gathering Edition

Source-informed by FEMA / Ready.gov mass-gathering guidance, DHS/CISA public safety resources, FBI public safety information, National Weather Service, and event emergency practices.

OPERATING PRINCIPLE

At a crowded event, the family should know how to leave before it needs to leave.

Crowds reduce mobility and information. The family's advantage is advance orientation: exits, meeting points, weather shelter, medical locations, communication rules, and a clear agreement that nobody goes back into a danger area to reunite.

What mass gathering can do to a household

Large gatherings can be affected by crowd surges, blocked exits, heat, lightning, severe weather, fire, structural problems, suspicious packages, intentional violence, transportation shutdowns, or separated children. Cellular networks can overload just when families try to reconnect.

Before the hazard develops

The family should complete the following actions before conditions deteriorate or an incident begins.

PART ONE

HOW TO PREPARE

Orient before becoming part of the crowd

- Review the venue map, bag policy, parking/transit plan, weather, prohibited items, emergency notices, and accessibility services before leaving home.
- On arrival, identify at least two exits, the nearest medical/first-aid location, security or staff posts, restrooms, and a family meeting point outside the main crowd flow.
- For children, place a parent/guardian phone number on a card or wristband without displaying unnecessary personal information. Teach them to approach uniformed staff, police, security, or a family with children if separated.
- Take a current photo of children or dependents at the start of the event so clothing is documented if separation occurs.
- Keep phones charged and use a simple text format for separation: SAFE / LOCATION / MOVING TO.

Choose the family's crowd position deliberately

- Avoid standing where fences, walls, stages, barricades, or dense crowd pressure leave no lateral escape route.
- Keep younger children out of tightly packed standing-room areas or surge-prone locations.
- If weather is threatening, know whether the venue has a real lightning/severe-weather shelter and how long it takes to reach it.

REUNIFICATION RULE

If separated during an incident, nobody moves back toward the hazard to find another family member. Each person follows responder instructions, moves to safety, then checks in and goes to the predetermined meeting point only if that location remains safe.

PART TWO

STAY SAFE DURING

When conditions change, early movement is safer than waiting for a crowd to react. Pay attention to exits becoming congested, security movement, abrupt crowd pressure, weather alerts, smoke, fights, or people moving rapidly away from one area.

If crowd density becomes unsafe

- Move toward the edge of the crowd when you can do so safely. Do not push against a dense opposing flow.
- Keep your feet under you, protect your chest space, and avoid bending down for dropped property in a moving crowd.
- If you fall, protect your head and try to get up as soon as a safe opening exists. Help children remain upright and close.

If there is fire, violence, or another immediate threat

- Create distance from the threat and use the safest available exit. Leave belongings behind.
- Follow law-enforcement, security, or venue instructions. Do not stop to record the incident.
- If evacuation is not possible and authorities direct sheltering or lockdown, move to the most protected available location, silence devices, and follow official instructions.
- Call 911 when safe and provide concise information about location, nature of the threat, and injuries.

If severe weather threatens

- Move to designated substantial shelter before lightning, hail, extreme heat, high winds, or tornado conditions make movement difficult.
- Do not shelter under temporary tents, stages, isolated trees, or other structures not designed for severe weather unless event officials specifically identify them as safe.

EARLY EXIT RULE

If the family sees a credible safety problem developing, leaving before an official mass evacuation may be reasonable when exits and routes are still safe and event rules allow it. Do not wait for the entire crowd to make the same decision.

PART THREE

AFTER THE DISASTER

After leaving the immediate danger area, focus on accountability, medical needs, official information, and transportation. Do not crowd emergency access points or return to retrieve property.

Account and reunify

- Send a brief text to the out-of-area contact and separated family members. Use the predetermined meeting point only if it is outside closures and away from emergency operations.
- Report missing children or vulnerable adults to police, security, or the venue's reunification operation immediately rather than conducting an uncontrolled search through restricted areas.

Preserve evidence and health information

- If you witnessed a serious incident, record observations after reaching safety and provide them to law enforcement when requested. Avoid spreading unverified claims on social media.
- Seek medical care for injuries, breathing problems, crushing pressure, significant falls, or severe emotional/physical symptoms.

Review the outing plan

After the event, identify which exit, meeting point, communication method, or transportation assumption failed. Adjust future event positioning and family instructions accordingly.

AFTER-ACTION QUESTION

What caused delay, confusion, separation, loss of information, unnecessary exposure, or a preventable failure of supplies? Correct that weakness while the event is still fresh in the family's memory.

FAMILY MASS GATHERING READINESS STANDARD

The plan is ready when the family can answer these questions without guessing.

✓	Can every family member identify two exits when we arrive?
✓	What is our meeting point outside the main crowd?
✓	What will a child do if separated?
✓	What is our text-message format if networks are overloaded?
✓	What conditions make us leave early?
✓	Where is the event's medical location and severe-weather shelter?
✓	Does everyone understand not to return toward the hazard to reunite?

PRACTICE STANDARD

At the next three large events you attend, make exit identification and the meeting point a routine 60-second family briefing on arrival. Practice the SAFE / LOCATION / MOVING TO text format with older children and adults.

REFERENCE BASIS

AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES USED FOR THIS PLAN

This ReadyParent plan consolidates widely accepted U.S. preparedness, response, safety, and recovery guidance specific to mass gathering. Local instructions and incident-specific guidance take priority.

Ready.gov — Mass Gathering Incidents — <https://www.ready.gov/mass-gatherings-incidents>

Public-place preparedness, situational awareness, evacuation, and post-incident actions.

CISA — Security of Soft Targets and Crowded Places — <https://www.cisa.gov/topics/physical-security/security-soft-targets-and-crowded-places>

Public safety and preparedness resources for crowded places.

National Weather Service — Weather Safety — <https://www.weather.gov/safety/>

Official severe-weather safety relevant to outdoor and mass gatherings.

Ready.gov — Make a Plan — <https://www.ready.gov/plan>

Family communication and reunification planning.

Publication note

Guidance reviewed August 2026. This document is educational preparedness guidance and does not replace instructions from local emergency management, law enforcement, fire/EMS, public-health authorities, utilities, building officials, event security, or other agencies with jurisdiction. Conditions vary by location and incident; when official instructions conflict with this plan, follow the official instructions.