



# Infant and toddler scenarios for use during evacuation centre exercises

The scenarios in this resource were developed from the findings of the **Babies and Young Children in the Black Summer (BiBS) Study**. When included in your evacuation centre exercises, they will help to protect babies and toddlers in future emergencies.

Over the page you will find four scenarios to help identify whether training and planning have accounted for the specific needs of pregnant women and mothers (or caregivers) of young children:

- Safe environments and resources for infant feeding, sanitation and sleep.
- Proactive identification of individual vulnerabilities.
- Awareness of child protection and safety issues.
- Understanding of the physical and mental capacity and personal needs of caregivers.
- Registration and other processes that support mothers or caregivers to meet their child's needs.

Before participating in an evacuation centre exercise, emergency responders and volunteers may find it helpful to complete the 15 minute free eModule, *Disaster support for babies, toddlers and caregivers*. Enrol now at [aba.asn.au/emodule-prepare](https://aba.asn.au/emodule-prepare)

## Key findings from the BiBS Study

- **As the primary caregivers of infants and young children, women were particularly vulnerable.** They often evacuated alone with multiple children, or were newly postpartum or heavily pregnant.
- **Women were concerned about the safety of their children in evacuation centres.** Preventing toddlers wandering was challenging. Dogs and other pets presented a threat. Child protection concerns and physical safety issues were raised by both mothers and emergency responders.
- **Mothers often did not ask for help.** They were too busy looking after their children, did not know who to ask for help, or did not feel confident asking for assistance.
- **Women prioritised their children's needs over their own,** and did not eat or drink as much as needed. Several pregnant women fainted while queuing because they were dehydrated.
- **Children's need for care continued unabated.** This made it difficult for women to seek assistance, access resources and attend to their own personal care needs, like going to the toilet.
- **Safe feeding and sleep presented challenges.** Mothers felt uncomfortable breastfeeding in public. Appropriate facilities and resources for safe formula feeding were not always available. Lack of safe sleep spaces for babies meant mothers tried to stay awake to protect infants from animals or strangers, or to prevent them slipping off pillows and other unsafe sleep surfaces.



### Scenario A

#### Mother Kate with baby Ruby (6 weeks) and toddler James (2.5 years)

- has not pre-registered
- evacuated without her partner
- has nowhere else to go
- has food for her toddler James
- needs a private space to breastfeed baby Ruby on arrival at the centre
- does not have a pram
- is concerned James has no fear of strangers and a tendency to run.

### Scenario B

#### Mother Mei with baby Ling (2 months) and her mother

- has not pre-registered
- is a single mother
- has nowhere else to go
- only has enough infant formula for one feed and Baby Ling is fully formula fed
- needs a place to make up and wash bottles for baby Ling
- needs somewhere to put baby Ling to sleep.

### Scenario C

#### Mother Christina with toddler Cecilia (2 years) and preschooler Heidi (4 years)

- has not pre-registered
- evacuated on her own with the children suddenly
- has nowhere else to go
- does not have any supplies (including nappies for Cecilia or toys to keep the children occupied)
- is 8 months pregnant
- has pelvic instability due to her pregnancy and finds it difficult to stand and walk
- needs to go to the toilet frequently.

### Scenario D

#### Mother Kadija with baby Abul (3 weeks) and preschooler Sara (3 years)

- has not pre-registered
- has nowhere else to go
- recently arrived as a refugee without her husband
- does not speak English well and will not ask for assistance
- will not breastfeed in public
- is mixed feeding (breastfeeding and formula feeding) Baby Abul
- gave birth to Baby Abul via caesarean section and is still in pain from the surgery
- preschooler Sara is very anxious and will not leave her mother's side.