



IMPACT 2026

Through Extension programs across the nation, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension Educators provide a multitude of Educational opportunities to meet the needs of diverse audiences.

Disaster Preparedness

Overview

Disaster preparedness education remains a vital part of Extension's work because disasters affect household safety, food security, caregiving, communication, and long-term recovery. The 2025–2026 affiliate submissions show that Family and Consumer Sciences educators responded to these needs through programming that addressed immediate recovery after floods and tornadoes, household emergency planning, food and water safety, and specialized preparation for rural caregivers supporting family members with dementia. Taken together, the submitted programs demonstrate how Extension translates preparedness concepts into practical action steps families can use before, during, and after an emergency.

Program Reach and Participation

Based on the submissions received from Kentucky, North Carolina, and Colorado, disaster preparedness programming was offered at least 104 times and reached at least 5,688 direct participants, with an additional 239,828 virtual participants and at least 97 community partners engaged. These figures reflect both large-scale public outreach and targeted educational efforts. Kentucky reported extensive reach through disaster response and recovery programming, North Carolina documented broad disaster preparedness and food safety education delivered through multiple offerings, and Colorado contributed an innovative pilot focused on rural dementia caregivers and care partners. Although the formats and audience sizes varied by state, each program emphasized practical readiness and local relevance.



State-Specific Highlights

- **Kentucky:** *Emergency Disaster Preparedness* efforts responded to the effects of floods and tornadoes that destroyed or damaged homes across the state. Extension served communities as command centers, boots on the ground, and trusted resources during recovery while also helping families prepare for future events. Kentucky reported 53 program offerings, 3,670 direct participants, 238,628 virtual participants, and 77 community partners.
- **North Carolina:** *North Carolina FCS Disaster Preparedness and Food Safety Education* combined emergency readiness with safe food and water practices. Offered 50 or more times, the program reached 2,000 or more participants, engaged 15 or more community partners, and extended its message to 1,200 or more virtual participants. The program strengthened household readiness while helping families respond more effectively during emergencies.
- **Colorado:** *Prepared, Not Scared: Emergency Planning Empowers Rural Caregivers & Dementia Care Partners* demonstrated the importance of audience-specific preparedness education. This pilot reached 18 participants and 5 community partners, equipping rural caregivers with planning tools related to emergency readiness, financial decision-making, and advance care planning. The program also reduced stress by helping participants think through emergency scenarios before a crisis occurs.

"I feel better prepared to keep my family safe during emergencies."

-North Carolina participant

Participant Outcomes and Areas of Impact

Across the submissions, participant outcomes centered on greater confidence, stronger planning behaviors, and improved ability to respond effectively in stressful situations.

North Carolina reported that participants increased confidence in disaster preparation, emergency food safety, and disaster recovery practices. **Colorado's** pilot participants reported significant knowledge gains and increased confidence in both emergency planning and financial and advance care planning, showing that preparedness education can be especially powerful when tailored to the realities of caregiving. In **Kentucky**, Extension's role in flood and tornado recovery highlighted the value of trusted local educators who can connect families to practical information and resources when communities are under pressure. Collectively, these programs addressed several core impact areas: household emergency planning, safe food and water management during disasters, post-disaster recovery support, and community resilience.



Community Collaboration and Future Direction

The combined work of these affiliates also underscores the importance of partnership. At least 97 community partners were involved in the submitted programs, demonstrating that effective preparedness education depends on collaboration with local agencies, service organizations, and community networks. Looking ahead, the 2025–2026 data suggest strong opportunities to continue expanding disaster preparedness efforts through both broad public education and specialized programming for vulnerable populations. Future work can build on the strengths shown

here by increasing cross-sector partnerships, growing virtual outreach, and continuing to equip families with clear, actionable steps that improve readiness before disaster strikes and support recovery afterward.



This report was written by Dylan Gentry (University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension) and compiled by Dr. Dhruti Patel, NEAFCS Vice President for Public Affairs. For more information, please email dhrutip@umd.edu.

This document was generated with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. The authors of this report have thoroughly reviewed the AI generated information to ensure the highest level of accuracy, bias, and ethical standards.

Raising kids, Eating right, Spending smart

