



# Managing Food Allergies in Schools

## The Role of School Administrators



### Overview

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs*, ([www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/)) to help schools manage the risk of food allergies and severe allergic reactions in students. Managing food allergies can be accomplished through a partnership between families, health care providers, and schools. As a school administrator, you provide the leadership necessary to ensure that comprehensive plans are in place for protecting students with food allergies and for responding to food allergy emergencies.



### Did you know?

- A food allergy is an adverse immune system reaction that occurs soon after exposure to a certain food.
- Food allergy symptoms can include swollen lips, tongue, or eyes; itchiness, rash, or hives; nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea; congestion, hoarse voice, or trouble swallowing; wheezing or difficulty breathing; dizziness, fainting, or loss of consciousness; mood change or confusion.
- Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction that is rapid in onset and may cause death. The recommended first line treatment for anaphylaxis is the prompt use of an injectable medication called epinephrine and activating the emergency medical system (EMS/911).
- About 4% of students are affected by food allergies, and the incidence is increasing.<sup>1,2</sup>



**About 20% of students with food allergies (1 of 5) will have a reaction while at school.<sup>3</sup>**



## What can you do?

### ✓ Lead your school's planning for managing food allergies.

- Coordinate the planning and implementation of your school's Food Allergy Management and Prevention Plan (FAMPP). This is a comprehensive school plan that includes all strategies and actions needed to manage food allergies in the school setting.
- Identify a team leader to coordinate the development and implementation of the school's Food Allergy Management and Prevention Plan.

### ✓ Support professional development on food allergies for school staff.

- Provide professional development and training on food allergies for all school staff in coordination with the school nurse or other licensed health care professional in the absence of a school nurse.
- Ensure that all school staff understands the school's legal responsibilities under federal law.
- Communicate school district policies and the school's plan for managing food allergies to all school staff, substitute teachers, classroom volunteers, and families.

### ✓ Oversee the daily management of food allergies for students.

- Ensure that school district food allergy policies and the school food allergy management and emergency plans are being implemented by all school staff.
- Arrange appropriate accommodations for students with 504 or Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) eligible services.
- Share information about students with food allergies with all staff members who need to know, and ensure the exchange of information occurs in accordance with The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and other federal and state confidentiality laws.
- Support practices that protect and promote the health of students with food allergies across the school environment, including before- and after-school activities and during transportation of students.
- Ensure that students with food allergies have an equal opportunity to participate in all school activities and events.

### ✓ Prepare your school to be ready to respond to food allergy emergencies.

- Ensure the response to life-threatening food allergy reactions is a part of your school's emergency plan.
- Set up an easy-to-use communication system for staff that may need to respond to food allergy reactions and emergencies.
- Communicate the school's responsibilities, expectations, and practices for managing food allergies to all parents through newsletters, announcements, and other methods.
- Make sure that staff delegated and trained to administer epinephrine auto-injectors can get to them quickly and easily.
- Make sure that staff prepare for the needs of students with food allergies during class field trips and other extracurricular activities.
- Practice responding to food allergy emergencies with emergency response drills.
- Be sure to tell the nurse or responsible administrator that it is an allergy emergency.

### ✓ Take the lead on creating and maintaining a healthy school environment.

- Establish food allergy policies and practices that address competitive foods, such as those available at school stores or vending machines, fundraiser events, athletic events, class parties, or after-school programs.
- Enforce school rules that prohibit discrimination and bullying as they relate to students with food allergies.





## Know your legal responsibilities

- The following laws prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability:
  - ◆ **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973** — students with disabilities are entitled to free and appropriate education (FAPE).
  - ◆ **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990** — gives civil rights protections and guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications.
  - ◆ **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)** — a student could be found eligible for services under IDEA Part B because of a food allergy only if it adversely affects the child's educational performance, or if the child needs special education and related services because of the food allergy.
- **The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act 2 USC 1758(a)** — governs meal accommodations for students with food related disabilities.
- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974** — governs the confidentiality of educational records.
- Familiarize yourself with your own state and district laws and policies.
- Learn more about federal laws and other legal regulations on pages 92–95 of the *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs*.



## Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs*. 2013. Available at: [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/)

Allergyhome.org resources for schools. Available at <http://www.allergyhome.org/schools/>

Food Allergy Resource and Education (FARE). Available at <http://www.foodallergy.org/resources/schools>

National Association of School Nurse (NASN), Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Tool Kit. Available at <http://www.nasn.org/ToolsResources/FoodAllergyandAnaphylaxis>

National School Boards Association, *Safe at School and Ready to Learn Policy Guide*. Available at <http://www.nsba.org/services/school-board-leadership-services/food-allergiesschool-health>

Learn more about these and other available food allergy resources here.



## References

1. Branum AM, Lukacs SL. Food allergy among US children: trends in prevalence and hospitalizations. *NCHS Data Brief*. 2008;10:1-8.
2. Liu AH, Jaramillo R, Sicherer SH, et al. National prevalence and risk factors for food allergy and relationship to asthma: results from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2005-2006. *J Allergy Clin Immunol*. 2010;126(4):798-806.e13.
3. Nowak-Wegrzyn A, Conover-Walker MK, Wood RA. Food-allergic reactions in schools and preschools. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med*. 2001;155(7):790-795.