

Students

Students with Special Health Care Needs

Accommodating Students with Special Health Care and Dietary Needs

The New Fairfield Public Schools recognize that there are many conditions that require food restrictions, attention, monitoring and safety practices. In particular, food allergies may be life threatening. For this reason, the District is committed to developing strategies and practices to minimize the risk of accidental exposure to life-threatening allergens, to assist in the management of glycogen storage disease, and to ensure prompt and effective medical response should a child suffer an allergic reaction while at school. The district further recognizes the importance of collaborating with parents and appropriate medical staff in developing such practices and encourages strategies to enable the student to become increasingly proactive in the care and management of his/her life-threatening allergy(ies), or glycogen storage disease as developmentally appropriate. There is currently no cure for life-threatening allergies; there is only medication available for emergency response. The only way to prevent the symptoms of an allergic response is to prevent exposure to allergens, which will require understanding and effort on the part of the entire school community.

Best practice asks us to reduce students' exposure to known allergens in the learning environment, reinforcing a safe and inclusive environment for all students. When a student with life-threatening allergies is present in a school environment, cooperation and compliance is necessary at all levels: District, School, Classroom, Home. Each level has its role and responsibilities:

District:

- Shall clearly communicate district policy to all school leaders and parents and provide for training on food allergy awareness and the administration of medication to all applicable personnel.
- Shall monitor and evaluate all schools for compliance with district policy and follow up with all individuals for instances of policy violations.

School:

- Each school shall clearly communicate the needs of students with life-threatening food allergies to their school community through letters to classroom communities and their families and of district and school expectations of compliance.
- Schools leaders shall inform PTO leaders of the need for safety and inclusion in all school sponsored events.

Classroom:

- Peers shall be educated as to the individualized safety and inclusion needs of fellow students.
- Expectations of compliance shall be clearly communicated to staff, students and their families.

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Home:

- Families should be educated on food allergy awareness and how to comply with safety requests for students with life-threatening allergies.
- Families should make every effort possible to ensure the safety of students with life-threatening food allergies when sending a snack into the learning environment.
- Students with life-threatening food allergies should know to never accept food from others and how to communicate their needs to staff and peers.
- Parents of students with life-threatening allergies shall help their student access developmentally appropriate self-advocacy skills. Parents may choose to collaborate with schools on these skills.

To this end, the New Fairfield Public Schools adopt the following protocols related to the management of special health care needs and life-threatening allergies for students enrolled in district schools.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a safe environment for students with food related special health care needs, food allergies and glycogen storage disease and to support parents regarding food allergy management. In accordance with applicable law, it is the policy of the Board of Education to provide all students, through necessary accommodations where required, the opportunity to participate fully in all school programs and activities.

The focus of this plan shall be prevention, education, awareness, communication and emergency response. The management plan shall strike a balance between the health, social normalcy and safety needs of the individual student with food related special health care needs or life-threatening food allergies and the education, health and safety needs for all students. The District Plan shall be the basis for the development of the procedural guidelines that will be implemented at the school level and provide for consistency across all schools within the district.

An identified allergic student is one who has been identified to the district by a written statement from the student's parent or guardian and his/her physician. Such written statement shall include a specific plan for allergy avoidance and a written emergency plan/orders to be followed in the event an allergic student ingests or believes he/she has ingested an offending food. The school nurse will coordinate and direct activities to implement and follow the plan/orders provided.

I. The goals for the District-wide Plan include:

- A. To maintain the health and protect the safety of children who have food related special health care needs and/or life-threatening food allergies in ways that are developmentally appropriate, promote self-advocacy and competence in self-care and provide appropriate educational opportunities.

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- B. To ensure that interventions and individual health care plans for students with life-threatening food allergies are based on medically accurate information and evidence-based practices.
- C. To define a formal process for identifying, managing, and ensuring continuity of care for students with life threatening food allergies across all transitions. (PreK-Grade 12)

It is the policy of the Board of Education to follow the guidelines developed and promulgated by the Connecticut Department of Public Health and Department of Education for students within the District with life-threatening food allergies and glycogen storage disease. Such guidelines include (1) education and training for school personnel on the management of students with life-threatening food allergies including symptom recognition, effective hygiene measures and glycogen storage disease, including training related to the administration of medication with a cartridge injector and the provision of food or dietary supplements, (2) procedures for responding to life threatening allergic reactions to food, (3) a process for the development of individualized health care and food allergy action plans for every student with a life-threatening food allergy, (4) a process for the development of individualized health care and glycogen storage disease action plans for every student with glycogen storage disease and such plan shall include, but not be limited to, the provision of food or dietary supplements by the school nurse or by any school employee approved by the school nurse, to a student with glycogen storage disease provided such plan does not prohibit a parent/guardian or a person they so designate, to provide food or dietary supplements on school grounds during the school day, and (5) protocols to prevent exposure to food allergens.

II. Food Services

The Board recognizes the need to help children avoid foods to which the child is allergic and/or he/she needs to avoid for other health reasons and to establish emergency procedures to treat allergic reactions that may occur. In some cases, a student's disability may prevent him/her from eating meals prepared for the general school population.

The nature of the student's disability, the reason the disability prevents the student from eating the regular school meals, including foods to be omitted from the student's diet, indication of the major life activity affected by the disability, the specific diet prescription along with the substitution(s) needed will be specifically described in a statement signed by a licensed physician. The district, in compliance with USDA Child Nutrition Division guidelines, will make reasonable accommodations to provide substitute meals to food-allergic students, based upon the physician's signed statement. Meal service shall be provided in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the disabled student.

Food labels with ingredients and serving sizes will be made available to anyone upon request.

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III. Prevention

- A. The commonly recognized top allergens are: dairy, egg, wheat, peanut, tree nut, shellfish, fish, soy and sesame. Parents/guardians sending snacks from home for consumption in the classroom are asked to be mindful of this heightened risk. The District, in partnership with school staff, shall counsel all parents against providing children with food items containing a particular allergen, if the presence of that allergen poses a serious risk to a student in the class. All stakeholders share in the responsibility of keeping children safe in the classroom by complying with this.
- B. The District team shall provide a voluntary, suggested snack list for parents who would like guidance on identifying nut-free snacks for their children.
- C. All in school celebrations shall be food free and food shall not be used as a reward.
- D. All elementary schools will designate food free zones, including the Library, Computer Lab, Music Room, Art Room, Gym, Stage, and Science Room.
- E. Hand washing is required after food has been consumed. The school will provide hand wipes for mandated use for students to use after food has been consumed, if hand washing is not available. Students will be required to remain at their desks/seats when eating in the classroom, to contain the spread of allergens. Hand sanitizer is not effective in the removal of food proteins.
- F. All desks will be cleaned with soap and water with disposable towels, wipes, or other approved cleaning agents after food is consumed in the classroom. Students may only clean their own area.
- G. All cafeteria tables will be cleaned with soap and water or other approved cleaning agents and disposable towels, after each use. Students may only clean their own area.
- H. To the extent possible, food and food containers should not be used in classrooms.
- I. If a clearly noncompliant food is present in a classroom or restricted area, the noncompliant food will be removed from the classroom or restricted area.

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J. Community/PTO use of elementary school facilities:

1. No food is allowed in any classroom;
2. Any event in which food will be served or consumed must be held in the school cafeteria or outdoors;
3. Outside organizations are encouraged to serve only nut-free food items and consult the suggested food list referenced on the District's website when selecting food to be served in the cafeteria or outdoors.
4. All outside organizations shall receive notice of the Prevention Section of this policy when reserving school facilities and must comply with the expectations above.

IV. Education/Communication

- A. All school personnel, as well as bus drivers, will be educated on how to recognize symptoms of allergic reactions, preventative strategies to minimize a child's risk of exposure to life-threatening allergies, and what to do in the event of an emergency. Staff education will be coordinated by the principal and school nurse, utilizing a consistent District training module supported by the town Director of Health. Any such training regarding the administration of medication shall be done in accordance with District Policy and State Law.
- B. The District shall offer training consistent with District Policy #5141.21 Protocol for Administration of Emergency Medications by Non-nursing Personnel.
- C. The District shall provide each school with consistent and age-appropriate information for students about food allergies, how to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction and the importance of adhering to the school's policies regarding food and snacks, as well as the development of empathy, understanding, and tolerance for individuals with life-threatening allergies and glycogen storage disease. The principal shall coordinate the delivery of this educational information with building staff.
- D. The school nurse shall be responsible for coordinating the communication among parents, a student's individual health care provider and the school regarding a student's life-threatening allergic condition. School staff responsible for implementing a student's IHCP will be notified of their responsibilities and provided with appropriate information as to how to minimize risk of exposure and how to respond in the event of an emergency.

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- E. The school administrative staff and school nurse shall communicate annually to all school personnel the availability of training regarding Policy #5141.21, Protocol for the Administration of Emergency Medications by Non-nursing Personnel.
- F. Each school will ensure that there are appropriate communication systems available within each school (i.e. telephones, cell phones, walkie-talkies) and for off-site activities (i.e. field trips) to ensure that school personnel are able to effectively respond in case of emergency.
- G. The District shall develop standardized letters to be sent home to parents introducing, explaining and enforcing the District's food allergy policy and protocols.
- H. The District shall annually, not later than October 1, provide notice to parents of this Policy, and
 1. Make the policy available on the District's Website and/or the websites of each school under the District's jurisdiction.
 2. Provide notice of the Policy in conjunction with the annual written statement provided to parents and guardians as required by subsection (b) of section 10-231c of the Connecticut General Statutes.
- I. The District shall annually update its resources for voluntary, suggested snack alternatives for families.
- J. All communication, written or verbal, shall be compliant with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

It is the Board's expectation that specific building-based guidelines/actions will take into account the health needs and well-being of all children without discrimination or isolation of any child. It is the Board's belief that education and open and informative communication are vital for the creation of an environment with reduced risks for all students and their families. In order to assist children with life-threatening allergies to assume more individual responsibility for maintaining their safety as they grow, it is the policy of the Board that guidelines shift as children advance through the primary grades and through secondary school.

- (cf. 5141 – Student Health Services)
- (cf. 5141.21 – Administering Medication)
- (cf. 5141.23 – Students with Special Health Care Needs)
- (cf. 5141.3 – Health Assessments)
- (cf. 5145.4 – Nondiscrimination)

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- Legal Reference: Connecticut General Statutes
- 10-15b Access of parent or guardian to student's records.
 - 10-154a Professional communications between teacher or nurse and student
 - 10-207 Duties of medical advisors
 - 10-212a Administration of medications in schools
 - 10-212c Life threatening food allergies; Guidelines; district plans, as amended by P.A. 12-198
 - 10-212a(d) Administration of medications in schools by a paraprofessional
 - 10-220i Transportation of students carrying cartridge injectors
 - 52-557b Good Samaritan Law. Immunity from liability for emergency medical assistance, first aid or medication by injection
 - PA 05-104 An Act Concerning Food Allergies and the Prevention of Life-Threatening Incidents in Schools
 - PA 05-144 and 05-272 An Act Concerning the Emergency Use of Cartridge Injectors
 - The Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies section 10-212a through 10-212a-7
- Federal Legislation
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 29 U.S.C. 794 § 504; 34 C.F.R. § 104 et. seq.
 - American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 42 U.S.C. § 12101 et seq.; 29C.F.R. § 1630 et.seq.
 - The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA)
 - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1976 (IDEA) (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et. seq.). 34 C.F.R. § et seq.
 - FCS Instruction 783-2, Revision 2, Meal substitution for medical or other special dietary reasons.

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NEW FAIRFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOLS
New Fairfield, Connecticut