

Management of Life Threatening Allergies

ACCEPT Education Collaborative recognizes the increasing prevalence of student food allergies and the life-threatening nature of allergies for many students. It is the policy of the Collaborative to work with parents, physicians, staff, and students to minimize the risk of exposure to allergens that pose a threat to students and provide a safe educational environment. The focus of allergy management within the Collaborative will be prevention, preparation, and emergency response. These policies and procedures aim to assist students with assuming more individual responsibility for their health and safety as they develop and optimize their participation in school and the community.

Background

Allergic food reactions can span a wide range of severity of symptoms. The most severe and potentially life threatening reaction is anaphylaxis. This protocol is to be used for students who are at risk for anaphylaxis and in circumstances where a previously undiagnosed life-threatening allergic response occurs.

Anaphylaxis is a potentially life-threatening medical condition occurring in food allergic individuals after exposure to their specific food allergens. Anaphylaxis refers to a collection of symptoms affecting multiple systems in the body, the most dangerous of which are breathing difficulties and a drop in blood pressure or shock, which are potentially fatal. The most common causes of anaphylaxis in children include allergies to:

- Foods (most commonly; dairy products, eggs, fish/shellfish, milk, peanuts/tree nuts, soy, wheat)
- Insect stings
- Latex

Anaphylaxis can occur immediately or up to two hours following allergen exposure, so it is important to:

- Identify student at risk
- Have appropriate preventative policies
- Be prepared to handle an emergency

Purpose and Goal

ACCEPT cannot guarantee a food allergen-free environment for all students with life threatening allergies, or prevent any harm to students in emergencies. The goal is to minimize the risk of exposure to food allergens that pose a threat to those students, educate the community, and maintain and regularly update a system-wide protocol for responding to their needs. A system-wide effort requires the cooperation of all stakeholders.

The sections below highlight the major responsibilities of the various groups, but each child's plan will be individualized and therefore not all responsibilities can be spelled out in this protocol.

The goal of ACCEPT regarding Life Threatening Food Allergies is to engage in a system-wide effort to:

- Prevent any occurrence of life-threatening food based allergic reactions
- Prepare for any allergic reactions to food
- Respond appropriately to any food allergy emergencies that arise

Responsibilities of the Collaborative

- Create a system-wide emergency plan for addressing life-threatening food-based allergic reactions.
- Provide semi-annual (2x/year) in-service training and education on reducing food-allergy risks, recognizing food allergy symptoms, and emergency procedures for staff.
- Training shall include, but not be limited to:
 - A description/definition of severe allergies and a discussion of the most common foods causing allergic reactions.
 - The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis.
 - The correct use of an Epi-pen.
 - Specific steps to follow in the event of an emergency.
- Adopt a **“NO FOOD TRADING/SHARING”** and **“NO UTENSIL SHARING”** procedure in all schools.
- School Nurses in conjunction with the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s) and the primary care provider/allergist prepare an Allergy Action Plan/Individual Health Care Plan for any student with a life-threatening food allergy.
- Provide and maintain life-threatening food allergy free tables in each school as needed by the Individual Health Care Plan. These tables will be designated by a universal symbol. Staff members will clean life-threatening food allergy tables.
- Make the Individual Health Care Plan available in the nurse’s office and a student’s classroom. Recommend that parents/guardians attach a photograph of their student with a Life-Threatening Food Allergy to their Individual Health Care Plan.
- Make EpiPens (belonging to the school and those prescribed to the students) available in the nurse’s office and in other clearly designated locations as specified in the Individual Health Care Plan. Students are encouraged to keep their EpiPen on their person when suitable.
- Familiarize teachers with the Individual Health Care Plan of their students and any other staff member who has contact with student on a need-to-know basis.

Responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian of a Student with a Life Threatening Allergy:

- Teach your child to:
 - Recognize the first symptom of an allergic/anaphylactic reaction.
 - Speak with a teacher or nurse as soon as your child feels a reaction is starting. Encourage self –advocacy.
 - Carry his/her own epinephrine injector when appropriate.
 - Not to share snacks, lunches, drinks or utensils.
 - Understand the importance of hand washing before and after eating.

- Report teasing and/or bullying that may relate to your child's allergy.
- Encourage education on label reading and ingredient safety.
- Develop awareness of their environment, including allergy-controlled zones and to practice developmentally appropriate behavior regarding health and safety.
- Inform the school nurse of your child's allergies as soon as possible after diagnosis and at the beginning of every school year.
- Work with the school team collaboratively to develop an Individualized Healthcare Plan, and provide an Allergy Action Plan.
- Notify the transportation department if your child has a life threatening allergy.
- Notify the transportation department if your child will require any special provisions during transport to and from school. There is no eating or drinking on the vans.
- Complete and submit all required medication forms.
- Provide the school with current emergency contact numbers and medical information.
- Provide the school nurse with up-to-date emergency medication. Medications must comply with the district policy of being in the original pharmacy packaging with appropriate labeling information.
- Parents should consider providing a medical alert bracelet for their child.
- Encourage your child to wash hands before and after handling food.
- Inform the school nurse of any changes in your child's life threatening allergy status.
- Provide the school nurse with a physician's statement if your child no longer has a life-threatening allergy.

Responsibilities of the Student with a Life Threatening Allergy:

- Develop a relationship with the school nurse and another trusted adult to assist in identifying issues related to the management of your life-threatening allergy while in school.
- Know your symptoms that indicate you may be having a reaction.
- Speak with a teacher or nurse as soon as you suspect symptoms are starting.
- Stay with an adult until cleared by the school nurse. Do not travel to the nurse without an adult with you.
- Do not share or trade food, drinks, and utensils. Understand the importance of hand washing before and after eating, and often during the day.
- Know how to use your EpiPen. Carry one at all times if your parent and school nurse feel it is important.
- Be aware of your environment as it relates to your allergy. Learn to read food labels.
- Speak up and question food ingredients in restaurants, school, friend's homes or other new situations.
- Report teasing and bullying by other students as it relates to your allergy.

Responsibilities of the ACCEPT Nurse Leader

- Will familiarize teachers with the Individual Health Care Plan of their students and any other staff member who has contact with student on a need-to-know basis.

- Provide in-service training and education for staff regarding life-threatening allergies, symptoms, risk reduction procedures and emergency procedures including demonstration on how to use the Epi-pen.
- Send letters to all parents of children assigned to a classroom where one of the students has been identified as having a Life-Threatening Food Allergy.
- Post the school's emergency protocol on Life-Threatening Food Allergies in appropriate locations.
- Notify staff of the locations of Epi-pens in the school.
- Develop a contingency plan and share with all staff and students in the event the nurse is not in the office or in the building. Staff will call 911 in all instances of any allergic reaction.

Responsibilities of the School Nurse:

- The school nurse is the primary coordinator of each student's health plan.
- Develop an Individual Health Care Plan for each student diagnosed with a life-threatening allergy.
- Maintain updated Individual Health Care Plans in the nurse's office and in the student's homeroom at each school.
- Provide information about students with Life-Threatening Allergies to staff.
- Provide in-service training and education for staff regarding Life-Threatening Allergies, symptoms, risk reduction procedures, and emergency procedures including demonstration on how to use the Epi-pen.
- Familiarize teachers with the Individual Health Care Plan of their students and any other staff member who has contact with student on need-to-know basis.
- The school nurse will be responsible for following Department of Public Health regulations governing the administration of prescription medications. Nurses are also responsible for following the regulations that permit registration of non-licensed personnel to be trained and to administer Epi-pens.
- Determine appropriate locations for storing the Epi-pen and the possibility of receiving more than one Epi-pen as necessary.
- Inform the parent/guardian if any student experiences an allergic reaction that has not been previously diagnosed.
- Emergency protocol will be in place in the event the student travels off-site. Back-up procedures will be in place in the event the ACCEPT nurse is not in the building.
- Be available to review Individual Health Care Plans if needed.

Responsibilities of the Teachers:

- Receive and review the Individual Health Care Plan, in collaboration with the nurse and parent(s) of any student(s) in your classroom with life-threatening allergies.
- Leave information in an organized, prominent and accessible format for substitute teacher.
- Participate in in-service training for students with life-threatening allergies twice yearly.
- Implement the Individual Health Care Plan as necessary in the classroom.
- Participate in the planning of a student's re-entry into school after an anaphylactic reaction.
- Advise parents of any school related activity that requires the use of food in advance of the project or activity. Obtain parental permission prior to food-based school activities.

- Celebrations and special events involving food should be limited. Whenever possible, the use of food in the classroom should be for instructional purposes.
- Offering food used as reward or incentives must be in the student's IEP and behavior plan.
- Collaborate with nurse leader to send out letters to all parents/guardians of students in a class with an individual with a Life Threatening Food Allergy.
- Whenever reasonable, the teacher will reinforce appropriate hygiene techniques/hand washing before and after eating.
- Consider students with life-threatening allergies when planning any changes from the classroom routine such as a field trip.
- Ensure teaching assistants, student teachers, therapists, and substitute teachers are informed of the student's food allergies and necessary safeguards.

Protocols and Procedures for Management of Life-Threatening Food Allergies

Protocols and procedures within ACCEPT Collaborative will be reviewed and modified as appropriate, and will include the following:

- All staff must participate in Collaborative-wide training regarding management of life threatening allergies conducted twice yearly.
- An individualized health care plan will be developed for each student with diagnosed life threatening allergies.
- All students with a diagnosed life threatening allergy must have access to their epinephrine auto injector (Epi pen) at all times.
- Stock epinephrine auto injectors will be located in the health office at each location to address reactions in those who are undiagnosed.
- When using food in the curriculum, teachers must provide information to parents/guardians regarding the proposed use and when applicable, the ingredient list.
- Teachers should receive permission from parent/guardians of students with documented life threatening food allergies and/or dietary intolerances prior to participation in food activities.
- Non-curriculum related classroom celebrations should be limited, and should be food-free whenever possible. When food is offered during celebrations, parents must be notified ahead of time and given the option to opt their child out of the celebration.
- The use of food as a reward or incentive during the school day is prohibited except as indicated in a student's IEP and behavior plan
- Students should be discouraged from food sharing and trading.
- Nut-free tables should be set up and maintained when deemed appropriate.
- Snacks and other foods provided to students for nourishment purposes must be allergen-free and prior parental permission should be obtained whenever possible.