Allergies in School Setting Process

The prevalence of reported food allergies has continued to increase significantly over the last several years. Those children diagnosed with a food allergy are at significant risk of anaphylaxis, a life-threatening reaction. In October 2002, the Massachusetts Department of Education in collaboration with the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology recommended that all schools have in place a system to identify children with life-threatening allergies. Education of all staff in life-threatening allergy awareness is the cornerstone of this initiative.

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

School-wide Expectations

- At all times, Wakefield Public Schools seeks to remain sensitive to all life-threatening allergies and will take reasonable measures to ensure a peanut, nut and latex-sensitive environment. **We ask all parents to refrain from sending peanut, nut and latex products to school with their children.**
- All schools will require that any parties and celebrations during the school day be food free.
- The use of food for curriculum instruction or special luncheons during the school day will be restricted to the Culinary Arts, Life Skills programs and the WHS Alternative Program. Food may be permitted for curriculum and/or instructional purposes only when (1) an alternative instructional method cannot provide equal educational value and (2) all measures are taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students and staff.
- The use of food as a reward in any classroom shall be excluded.
- The principal of each school, especially at the elementary level, shall implement a No Food or Utensil Sharing practice.
- No bake sales will be permitted at schools.
- Food sold as a fundraising activity shall be restricted to food items designed for delivery and consumption after school hours (see Guide to Food Policy for Groups Outside of the School Day).
- For end of year, school sponsored events, food may be served only if provided by the food service department, the culinary arts program or the approved food list (see Appendix A). Other items may be served only if the cafeteria manager at the respective school approves them. A request in writing should be made at least two weeks in advance of the event.
- For school-sponsored events that occur after school hours (such as dances) food may be served only if provided by the Food Services Department or is on the prescribed list. Other items may be served only if the cafeteria manager at the respective school approves them. A request in writing should be made at least two weeks in advance of the event.
- For any event outside of the regular school day, which is neither sponsored by or part of the Wakefield School system, the sponsor of such an event is responsible for ensuring that appropriate provisions (see Appendix B- Guide to Food Policy for Groups Outside of the School Day) regarding life-threatening allergies are in place.

Employee Training and Education

- School nurses will provide allergy awareness education and EpiPen and epinephrine auto injector training for all Wakefield School Department employees, based on the Department of Education and Department of Public Health recommendations. This education will include, but is not limited to:
  - The significances of life-threatening allergies and a discussion of the most common food, insect, latex and medication allergies.
  - How to create a safe environment for students with life-threatening allergies
  - The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis
How to use an epinephrine auto injector

How to deal with an actual or potential anaphylactic reaction

- The parent/guardian or primary care physician of any student with a life threatening allergy shall provide documentation to the school system that contains the following information:
  - Identification of the allergy
  - Description of typical symptoms
  - Dosing instructions for medication

This information shall be updated at least annually or as needed due to changes in the student’s health needs. All past documentation of a student’s health report, along with any new or updated information received, shall be reviewed and utilized by school nurses.

- Upon receipt of written documentation of an allergy, the school nurse shall develop an Emergency Care Plan (Appendix C) for the student, which must be approved by the parent and physician. The School Nurse is responsible for the continued maintenance of the Emergency Care Plan and for ensuring that said forms are available to all school staff. Any changes made to the Emergency Care Plan must be made immediately available to school staff.

- The school nurse, using the information provided by the child’s parent/guardian and health care provider, will develop an Individualized Health Care Plan for the student. The Individualized Health Care Plan shall be updated as a student’s condition changes.

- A school nurse will be invited to all 504 or IEP meetings for students with life threatening allergies as appropriate.

- The school nurse shall identify with the staff those students at risk, the types of allergies, and review protocol to follow during an allergic reaction, including but not limited to the administration of epinephrine via auto injector.

- The school nurse shall train designated school personnel to administer an epinephrine auto injector according to the student’s Emergency Care Plan. Students in grades 5 through 12 may carry their own epinephrine auto injector, with written permission from both the parent/guardian and a physician.

- Each school’s Incident Management Plan will include how to respond to a life-threatening allergic reaction. This plan will be reviewed annually by each building principal and will be part of all administration training.

- Annually, all school staff, including teachers, teacher assistants, building substitutes, food service staff and bus drivers/monitors employed by the school system will receive a copy of this policy and complete an acknowledgement form that they have received and reviewed said policy.

- Teachers will provide a list for substitutes of students with life-threatening food allergies.

- Nurses will notify the School Nutrition Department of any students with allergies so that this can be noted by the Nutrition Department.

Classroom protocol (for rooms with food-allergic children)

- As stated previously, the school will promote "NO FOOD TRADING” and "NO UTENSIL SHARING” policies.

- All restrictions regarding foods for consumption also apply to materials used for classroom projects. For example, any organic materials, such as birdseed, play dough, clay, etc. should be pre-approved by parents of allergic children to avoid accidental exposure to nuts (that may be included in the birdseed), or wheat (that may be included in the clay), etc. Special care should be taken when using recycled materials such as milk containers, etc. since trace amounts of food previously contained in these materials may be present.

- All students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands after eating and/or handling food in the classroom. The use of water/soap in a sink is preferable but when sinks are not
available in or near the classroom, disposable wipes kept in the classroom and disposed of immediately are a good option.

- A copy of the child’s Emergency Care Plan and an epinephrine auto injector will be stored in each of the student’s classrooms at all times.
- The school will provide these classrooms with a working 2-way intercom and/or telephone for quick communication with the school nurse in the event of an allergic reaction.

**Cafeteria Protocol**

- All cafeteria protocols should include the following but not limited to the following.
  - A monitoring system for the children with life threatening allergies and their class table.
  - An inclusive dining experience for children with life threatening allergies.
- Food service employees will only use latex free gloves.
- The Food Services Director will be trained how to read product labels to recognize food allergens.
- The Food Services Director will check allergy alerts from Fellows of the American Academy of Nursing (FAAN) on a regular basis via email.
- The Food Services Director will contact manufacturers to ensure that all food sold in the schools have ingredient labels. Ingredient labels will be accumulated by the Food Services Director to maintain on file.
- All students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands after eating and/or handling food.

**Field Trip Management**

- Whenever students travel on field trips for school, a clear plan to activate Emergency Medical Services (911) should be developed for and reviewed by all teachers and chaperones. Teachers leading the field trip should bring with them the procedure for contacting EMS. This must include the local emergency response number for the area since 911 does not patch to the local emergency response center.
- Field trips need to be chosen carefully; no child should be excluded from a field trip due to the potential of unavoidable allergen exposure.
- The field trip permission slip should include the allergy precautions for the trip, specifically reminding families to pack allergen-free snacks and lunch.
- The Emergency Care Plan and epinephrine auto injector will accompany the allergic student on all field trips.
- If the parent of a life threatening allergy student is not available to attend the field trip, the student will automatically be placed in the teacher’s/designee’s group.