

# **Guidelines for the Care of Students with Food Allergies at Risk for Anaphylaxis**

Guidance for school leaders when adopting and administering a policy for the care of students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis

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# Introduction

*Guidelines for the Care of Students with Food Allergies at Risk for Anaphylaxis* is intended as a reference and illustrative guide for local school boards or charter school leadership. It can be used to help create and implement school district policies and administrative regulations. This document should not serve as treatment guidelines for healthcare practitioners. Any portion of this document may be reproduced for educational purposes or policy development.

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## Acknowledgements

The commissioner of DSHS consulted with the Food Allergy Ad Hoc Committee to develop these guidelines. [Senate Bill \(SB\) 27, 82nd Legislature, Regular Session, 2011](#), created the committee. These guidelines are intended for local school districts' boards of trustees and governing bodies of open-enrollment charter schools.

The commissioner thanks the 2011 Food Allergy Ad Hoc Committee for their contribution in developing these guidelines.

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Angela Hilger, MD	Texas Medical Association/Texas Pediatric Society

DSHS also appreciates the Stock Epinephrine Advisory Committee (2020 and 2022) and the Texas School Health Advisory Committee (2020 and 2022) for reviewing the updated Food Allergy Guidelines. Links to the committees' websites are listed under the [\*\*Resources section.\*\*](#)

## Purpose

In response to the increase in students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis, [Senate Bill 27](#) (82nd Legislature, Regular Session, 2011) amended Chapter 38 of the Texas Education Code by adding [Section 38.0151](#). Statute requires the board of trustees of each school district and the governing body, or appropriate officers of open-enrollment charter schools, adopt and administer a policy for the care of students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis. The policy must follow guidelines developed by the commissioner of DSHS in consultation with the Food Allergy Ad Hoc Committee. A school district or open-enrollment charter school should review and revise their policy, as necessary, to ensure it is consistent with the DSHS guidelines.

# Background

A **food allergy** is an abnormal immune response to a food protein.<sup>1</sup> Symptoms of a food induced allergic reaction can range from mild to severe. Some allergic reactions can become life-threatening. Reactions vary with each person. Each exposure to a food allergen and the severity of an allergic reaction is not predictable.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that food allergies are a growing food safety and public health concern. Between 1997 and 2011, the prevalence of children with food allergies increased by 50 percent.<sup>2</sup> Current estimates state that 1 in 13 children, or about 2 students per classroom, are affected by food allergies.<sup>3</sup> In addition, about 40 percent of children with food allergies are allergic to more than one food. More than 40 percent of children with food allergies have experienced a severe allergic reaction, such as anaphylaxis.<sup>3, 4</sup>

Data show that up to 25 percent of first-time anaphylactic events in children occur on school grounds.<sup>5</sup> Children spend about 19 percent, or 6.3 hours per school day, of their waking hours in school where they can encounter foods containing allergens.<sup>6, 7</sup> There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of food allergens and early recognition and management of allergic reactions are important measures to prevent serious health consequences.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, school personnel should be ready to effectively manage students with food allergies. They should learn to recognize allergic reaction symptoms in diagnosed and undiagnosed students to respond to the students' emergency needs.



Caring for students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis requires a collaborative partnership among students, parents, healthcare providers, and school staff.

School superintendents could designate a school staff member who is knowledgeable about food allergies to serve as the district's point of contact. This person would oversee the development, implementation, and monitoring of a school district's food allergy management plan. The staff member would coordinate the activities of the food allergy management team on each campus. The school district should consider several key

elements when developing the district's food allergy management plan. The goal is to promote the physical safety of children with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis and support their emotional needs.

Elements that are key to develop a comprehensive food allergy management plan for schools include:

- Identifying students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis;
- Developing, implementing, communicating, and monitoring emergency care plans, 504 Plans\*, or Individualized Health Care Plans for students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis;
- Reducing exposure risk in the school setting;
- Training school staff to recognize anaphylaxis and have an appropriate emergency response; and
- Reviewing school policy and procedures after an anaphylactic reaction has occurred.

These guidelines can help a district to develop and administer a policy for the care of students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis.

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\* 504 Plans refer to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that protects qualified individuals from discriminations based on their disability. Section 504 requires that school districts provide a free appropriate public education to qualified students in their jurisdictions who have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities. For more information, see [Emergency Care Plans, 504 Plans, and Individualized Health Care Plans](#).

# Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis

**Anaphylaxis** is a life-threatening allergic reaction that usually takes place within a few minutes to several hours after exposure to an allergen.<sup>9</sup>

The federal Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education, and Research (FASTER) Act of 2021, lists nine foods as major food allergens and must conform to the food-labeling requirements:<sup>10</sup>

- Eggs,
- Milk,
- Peanuts,
- Tree nuts,
- Fish,
- Shellfish,
- Wheat,
- Soy, and
- Sesame.

Although the first eight foods listed above account for about 90 percent of all reactions<sup>8</sup> and sesame is listed as an allergen of emerging concern in the United States,<sup>4</sup> any food has the potential of causing a reaction. In addition, school settings may have non-food items, such as arts and crafts materials, that contain trace amounts of food allergens. Many products used in the school setting may contain food allergens. Cross contamination can occur when an allergen is transferred from one item (utensils, pots, pans, countertops, surfaces, etc.) to another. When preparing, handling, and serving food, it is critical to make sure that food preparation and serving utensils are not exposed to allergens. Allergic reactions can occur with trace exposure to food allergens.<sup>4</sup> Early recognition and management of allergic reactions are important to the safety of children with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis.



Other common causes of anaphylaxis include latex, insect stings or bites, and medication. While these guidelines are specific to food allergens, the treatment for suspected anaphylaxis is the same regardless of the trigger.

Anaphylaxis includes a wide range of symptoms that can occur in many combinations and is highly unpredictable. Children with food allergies are more likely to experience other allergies. Children diagnosed with asthma may be more likely to experience an anaphylactic reaction to foods and be at higher risk of death.

Deaths from food allergies are more likely to occur when the symptoms of anaphylaxis are not recognized and there is a delay in life-saving treatment. The only life-saving treatment for anaphylaxis is epinephrine and it should be administered quickly if a child is showing signs or symptoms of anaphylaxis.<sup>11</sup> A risk factor of a fatal anaphylactic reaction is not recognizing the severity of an anaphylactic reaction and delaying treatment with epinephrine.<sup>4</sup> In addition, teenagers and young adults with food allergies are at the highest risk of fatal food-induced anaphylaxis.<sup>4</sup>

Epinephrine is available through a physician's prescription and is delivered through an auto-injectable device. Epinephrine auto-injectors may also be available if the district has adopted an unassigned epinephrine auto-injector policy.

The severity of one reaction does not predict the severity of subsequent reactions. Any exposure to an allergen should be treated based on the child's Food Allergy Action Plan, Emergency Action Plan, and Individualized Health Care Plan.

Food allergies can have wide-ranging, negative effects on children and their families. It affects not only life at home but also school, work, vacation, and entertainment. Virtually no life activity remains unaffected by the presence of a potentially fatal allergy.<sup>12</sup>

Currently, management of food allergies consists of educating children, parents, and care providers (including school personnel) on the importance of strict avoidance of the food allergen, recognizing the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction, and initiating emergency treatment in case of an unintended ingestion or exposure. To address the complexities of food allergy management in schools, it is important that students, parents, caregivers, and school personnel work cooperatively to create a safe and supportive learning environment.

# Signs and Symptoms of an Allergic Reaction

Signs and symptoms of a life-threatening food allergy can involve multiple parts of the body. Areas affected can include the mouth, throat, nose, eyes, ears, lungs, stomach, skin, heart, and brain. The most dangerous symptoms include breathing difficulties and a drop in blood pressure or shock, which is potentially fatal.

## Signs of an allergic reaction by body part<sup>13</sup>

Body Part	Sign or Symptom
Mouth	Tingling, itching, swelling of the tongue, lips, or mouth; blue/grey color of lips
Throat	Tightness of throat; tickling feeling in the back of the throat; hoarseness or change in voice
Nose/Eyes/Ears	Runny, itchy nose; redness and/or swelling of eyes; throbbing in ears
Lung	Shortness of breath; repetitive shallow cough; wheezing
Stomach	Nausea; vomiting; diarrhea; abdominal cramps
Skin	Itchy rash; hives; swelling of face or extremities; facial flushing; pale/blue skin color
Heart	Thin weak pulse; rapid pulse; palpitations; fainting; blueness of face or nail beds; paleness
Mental or Emotional	Sense of “impending doom;” irritability; change in alertness; mood change; confusion

Children, especially very young ones, may show or describe their allergic reactions different than older children or adults. They may put their hands in their mouths, pull or scratch at their tongues, slur their words, or their voices may change (become hoarse or squeaky).<sup>14</sup>

# Treatment of Food Allergies

The best way to treat food allergies is to avoid the food allergens. However, avoidance is not as easy as it seems because it is impossible to eliminate all potential sources of accidental exposure in everyday life. The following section addresses a few of the possible treatment therapies for food allergies. It is not meant to serve as treatment guidelines for healthcare practitioners.

Food allergies are generally classified into three categories: IgE-mediated, non-IgE-mediated, and mixed (IgE- and non-IgE-mediated).<sup>15</sup> These classifications help direct treatment options.

IgE-mediated means that the body's immune system makes antibodies called immunoglobulin E (IgE) to neutralize allergy-causing food. These IgE antibodies react with the food and cause symptoms.<sup>16</sup> IgE-mediated food allergy reactions usually occur within minutes or up to two hours after ingesting or encountering the food allergen. Common symptoms of IgE-mediated reactions include nausea, diarrhea, stomach pain, breathing issues, and anaphylaxis.

Non-IgE mediated means that other parts of the body's immune system react to a certain food. This reaction causes symptoms but does not involve an IgE antibody.<sup>16</sup> The reactions appear hours to days after the ingestion of the food and usually relate to reactions in the gastrointestinal tract such as diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain, abdominal pain.<sup>16,17</sup>

Someone can have both IgE mediated and non-IgE mediated food allergies. Learn more about food allergy reactions from the [American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology](#); [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology](#); and [Food Allergy Research and Education](#).

There is growing research in oral, sublingual, and epicutaneous immunotherapy as treatment for individuals with food allergies.<sup>18</sup> Oral immunotherapy requires the daily ingestion of an allergen, usually in powder form. Sublingual immunotherapy involves holding an allergen, typically in tablet or liquid form, under the tongue for two to three minutes and then swallowing it daily. Epicutaneous immunotherapy involves placing a small allergen patch on the individual's back or upper arm.<sup>18</sup> Other emerging therapies include vaccines and anti-IgE therapies.

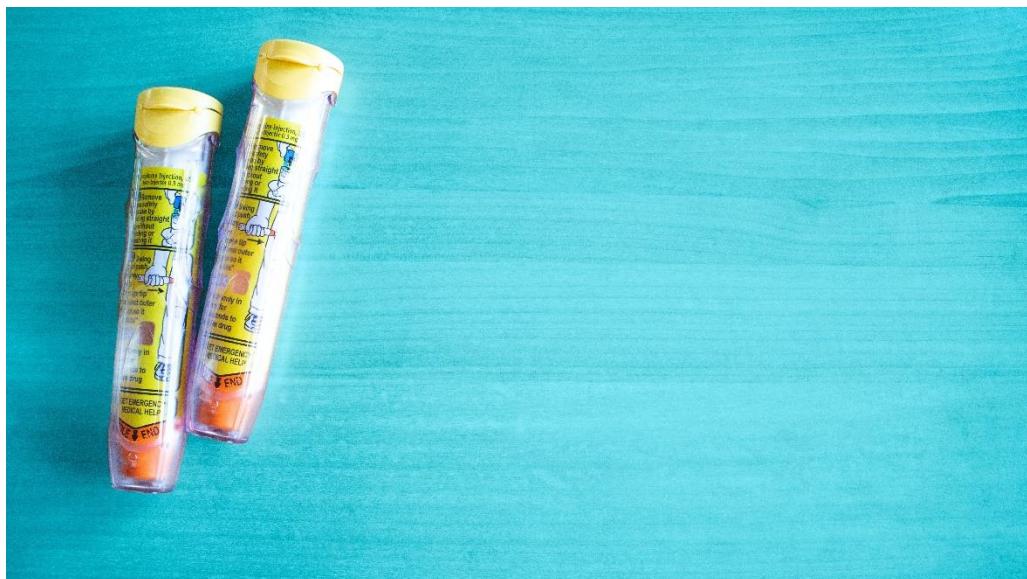
It is important to note that schools should not administer food allergy treatments to students or staff except for an epinephrine auto-injector in emergency situations. For more information about medication administration, review the Texas School Health Program's [\*\*Guide to Medication Administration in the School Setting\*\*](#).

As research continues to expand, new treatment options may be available to those with food allergies. Schools should consult their medical director or the student's allergist for additional questions about the student's food allergies and allergy treatment.

# Treatment of Anaphylaxis

Epinephrine is the first-line treatment in cases of anaphylaxis. Other medications have a delayed onset of action. Epinephrine is generally prescribed as an auto-injector device that is relatively simple to use. It is important to administer the epinephrine auto-injector at the first sign of symptoms to prevent serious consequences.

Anaphylaxis can occur immediately or up to two hours following exposure to an allergen. In approximately one third of anaphylactic reactions, the initial symptoms are followed by a delayed wave of symptoms two to four hours later. This combination of an early phase of symptoms followed by a late phase of symptoms is defined as biphasic reaction. While initial symptoms respond to epinephrine, the delayed biphasic response may not respond to epinephrine and may not be prevented by steroids.



**Therefore, it is critical that after giving epinephrine, emergency medical services (EMS) should evaluate the student, even if the symptoms appear to have resolved.** For more information on about notifying EMS, review the Texas School Health Program's [EMS Evaluation after Administering Epinephrine in Schools](#) document.

Because the risk of death or serious disability from anaphylaxis itself usually outweighs other concerns, existing studies clearly favor the benefit of epinephrine administration in most situations. There are no medical conditions that absolutely prohibit the use of epinephrine when anaphylaxis occurs.<sup>19</sup>

# Food Allergy Management in the School Setting

School districts and open-enrollment charter schools are required to develop and implement policies to address children with diagnosed food allergies at-risk for anaphylaxis. The school district's policy and administrative regulations should be comprehensive, yet flexible. They should focus on different food allergens, varying ages and maturity levels of students, as well as the physical properties and organizational structures of schools and communities.



While policies may differ in the detail, they should all address common evidence-based strategies in managing food allergies and anaphylaxis in the school setting. Policy and administrative regulations needed to support students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis should include:

- Identifying students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis;
- Developing, implementing, communicating, and monitoring of emergency care plans, 504 Plans, and/or Individualized Health Care Plans for students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis;
- Reducing exposure risk within the school setting;
- Training school staff to recognize anaphylaxis and appropriate emergency response; and
- Reviewing policy and procedures after an anaphylactic reaction.

To coordinate the management of food allergies within the school district, the superintendent may designate a school district (central office) employee who is knowledgeable about food allergies. An example of a designee could be the health services coordinator or lead nurse at the district level. The designee would serve as the point of contact for parents, healthcare providers, campus food allergy management team (if established by the campus), and other school staff. The superintendent's designee can help facilitate the development, implementation, and monitoring of comprehensive and coordinated administrative regulations. The designee can convene a multi-disciplinary team to address the components listed previously in this section. This

person should receive ongoing training on how to manage food allergies in the school setting, including how to administer epinephrine. The superintendent's designee may also work with the local School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to gain parent and community input to develop administrative regulations. They also can help to locate and coordinate resources necessary to fulfill the food allergy management strategies.



In order to achieve, coordinate, and monitor food allergy management on a campus, a food allergy management team may be created. See the [\*\*CDC Food Allergies in Schools Toolkit\*\*](#) for sample staff roles. Members of the food allergy management team may include, but are not limited to, a school nurse (when available), the principal, food service staff, custodial staff, a counselor, classroom teacher(s), and bus driver(s). The food

allergy management team can work with parents to support students with food allergies on the campus. The team can also help campus staff to carry out administrative regulations and student specific strategies.

# Identification of Students with Food Allergies at Risk for Anaphylaxis

The prevalence of food allergies has increased, as well as the potential for a food allergic reaction to become more life threatening. As such, schools need information to promote safety for children with food allergies who are at risk for anaphylaxis. It is important for parents to provide accurate and current health information when requested. This helps schools to take the following actions:

- Identify the child's food allergens;
- Specify the nature of the child's allergic reactions;
- Reduce the risk of exposure to food allergens;
- Provide emergency treatment to the student during the school day and at school-sponsored activities in case unintended exposure to a food allergen occurs; and
- Help with communication between the school and the student's healthcare provider.

Texas Education Code, Section 25.0022, states that upon enrollment of a child in a public school, a school district must request, by providing a form or otherwise, that a parent or other person with legal control of the child under court order take the following actions:

- Disclose whether the child has a food allergy or a severe food allergy that, in the judgement of the parent or other person with legal control, should be disclosed to the district to enable the district to take necessary precautions regarding the child's safety; and
- Specify the food to which the child is allergic and the nature of the allergic reaction.

In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture regulations require substitutions or modifications in school meals for children whose disabilities restrict their diets.<sup>20</sup> When in the licensed physician's assessment, food allergies may result in severe, life-threatening (anaphylactic) reactions, the child's condition would meet the definition of "disability" and the substitutions prescribed by the licensed physician must be made. The school nutrition program must receive a signed statement by a licensed physician that identifies the following:

- The child's disability;
- An explanation of why the disability restricts the child's diet;

- The major life activity affected by the disability; and
- The food or foods to be omitted from the child's diet and the food or choice of foods that must be substituted.

It is important to note that, because of the risk of anaphylaxis, school staff should also be trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction. They should be able to provide emergency treatment and properly activate EMS for all children showing signs and symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction.

School boards, especially those with school campuses located in remote areas with limited access to EMS, may want to consider adopting an unassigned epinephrine auto-injector policy. They also may want to have stock epinephrine to use if a person with a diagnosed food allergy has a life-threatening allergic reaction but does not have access to epinephrine, or a person with an undiagnosed allergy has a life-threatening allergic reaction. [\*\*25 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 37, Subchapter U \(Epinephrine Auto-Injector Policies in Schools\)\*\*](#) has more details and requirements for schools that want to adopt this voluntary policy. A voluntary unassigned epinephrine auto-injector policy requires a standing medical order for an emergency epinephrine auto-injector pack and training to administer an epinephrine auto-injector to a person reasonably suspected of experiencing anaphylaxis. Read more about unassigned epinephrine auto-injector policies on the [\*\*DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis website\*\*](#).

School districts should develop, implement, and monitor standardized procedures to obtain information about diagnosed food allergies from parents and the child's healthcare provider when they register for school. Parents or legal guardians must disclose, at the request of the school district, whether the child has a food allergy and should report as soon as possible after a child is diagnosed with a food allergy that places them at risk for anaphylaxis. For better communication across the districts, schools may want to use standardized forms to collect this information on an annual basis. ([\*\*See the DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis webpage for sample forms\*\*](#)).



The identification process is essential. Information from the identification process allows schools to take the following actions:

- More easily follow-up with parents, healthcare providers, and the campus food allergy management team (if established);
- Secure the Food Allergy Action Plan or Emergency Action Plan; and
- Begin planning for the child's care through the development of a 504 Plan or Individualized Health Care Plan, where appropriate.

# Emergency Care Plans, 504 Plans, and Individualized Health Care Plans

There are several types of adverse reactions that can occur with food. Adverse reactions can range from “food intolerance” to a food allergy that puts a child at risk for anaphylaxis.<sup>21</sup> Unlike a food allergy, a food intolerance does not involve the immune system and is not life threatening. A food allergy diagnosis requires a careful medical history, laboratory studies, and other diagnostic tests ordered by a licensed healthcare provider. The healthcare provider makes the medical diagnosis of a food allergy. After a medical diagnosis is made, a Food Allergy Action Plan or Emergency Action Plan (FAAP/EAP) will be developed by the healthcare provider in collaboration with the parents or legal guardians. The FAAP/EAP gives details about the child’s food allergy, outlines the care that the child will need to manage the food allergy, and states the actions to be taken in case of an allergic reaction. ([\*\*See the DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis webpage for sample FAAP/EAP forms\*\*](#)).



For clear communication between parents, healthcare providers, school administrators, and the campus food allergy management team (if established) in the case that a student has an allergic reaction at school, the FAAP/EAP may outline the following:

- Name, date of birth, and grade level of the child;
- A picture to easily identify the child;
- List of the foods to which the child is allergic;
- Indication if the child has asthma (there is a higher risk for severe reaction if the child has asthma);
- Description of past allergic reactions, including triggers and warning signs, as well as information about the child’s emotional response to the condition and their need for support;
- Clear instructions on what symptoms require the use of epinephrine immediately;
- Clear instructions, including diagrams, on how epinephrine should be administered;

- List of medications to use in an emergency, including the brand name, generic name, dosage to be given, and when to give an additional dose of emergency medications;
- Instructions about monitoring the child and communicating to EMS the medications that were given, what time the medications were given, and how to position the child when they have had a severe reaction;
- Place for a signature and date by the parent and the physician (or healthcare provider), school nurse, or another designated school representative or school administrator; and
- Place to list contact information for parents or guardians, healthcare providers, and other emergency contact information, including phone numbers.

In schools that have a school nurse, the FAAP/EAP may be used to develop an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHP), which outlines day-to-day nursing care to manage the student's food allergy. The [\*\*National Association of School Nurses' IHP position statement\*\*](#) describes what IHPs are and how to use them in the school setting. The school nurse may aid the process of implementing the FAAP/EAP by working with the campus food allergy management team (if established) and the parents.

To ensure a safe learning environment for the student with life-threatening food allergies, the parents and the student (when age appropriate) should meet with the campus food allergy management team (if established) to review the FAAP/EAP. The school may confirm that all consent forms are signed to administer medications, including self-administration. The school also can help to develop the IHP if there is a school nurse assigned to the campus. The meeting should occur before the child attends school, when returning to school after an absence related to the diagnosis, and anytime there are changes to the student's FAAP/EAP. This meeting is an opportunity to discuss how the campus will promote safety, minimize exposure, recognize signs and symptoms, and provide emergency treatment as outlined in the EAP.

In some instances, the school may also develop a 504 Plan to address the health and learning needs of a student. Students at risk for anaphylaxis may be considered to have a disability that requires services and program modifications. This can allow a student with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis to safely participate in the learning environment.

See the [\*\*DSHS Special Health Care Needs - Texas Guide to School Health Services webpage\*\*](#) for resources and more information on Section 504 in schools.

# Reducing Exposure Risk Through Environmental Controls

Protecting students with a food allergy from exposure to allergens is the most effective way to prevent life-threatening anaphylaxis. Current management of food allergies relies on strict avoidance of the food allergen, early recognition of symptoms, and prompt treatment when an allergic reaction occurs due to unintended exposure to the food. For children, dietary management in schools can be difficult because of allergens in classroom activities, such as arts and crafts, counting, science projects, parties, holidays and celebrations, cooking, food sharing, or school projects.<sup>8</sup>



To promote safety, policies and administrative regulations should outline district-wide, campus-wide, classroom-wide, and individual strategies used to manage children with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis. Even though ingestion is the most common food allergy trigger, consideration should be given to promoting safety in the following areas, including (but not limited to), the cafeteria, all classrooms, hallways,

common areas in the school, on the bus, and during all school-sponsored activities (for example, field trips, athletic events, on- and off-campus, and before and after school activities, etc.).

The superintendent's designee serves as the point of contact and works with the campus food allergy management team (if established). The designee and parents may help to develop individual campus strategies to support students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis.

Implementing appropriate environmental controls can help minimize risk of exposure to a food allergen.

Environmental controls include consideration of the following strategies:

- Identify high-risk areas in the school and implement strategies to limit exposure to food allergens. Likewise, implement general risk reduction strategies throughout the school and at school-sponsored activities. Children at risk for anaphylaxis should not be excluded from classroom activities based on their food allergies.
- Limit, reduce, or eliminate food from classroom(s) and other learning environments used by children with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis.
- Notify and educate school staff and parents to limit foods as needed on the campus, in the classroom, or at school-sponsored activities.
- Develop procedures to manage parent-provided classroom snacks, as allowed by Texas statute, to ensure that students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis are considered.
- Implement appropriate cleaning protocols in the school and ensure that special attention is given to identified high-risk areas.
- Train the school food service department to reduce the risk of cross-contamination during food preparation and food service, as well as minimizing foods served in the cafeteria that may contain food allergens.
- Train teachers, staff, and parents on food allergy awareness.
- Post visual reminders promoting food allergy awareness.
- Educate children to not trade or share food, snacks, drinks, or utensils.
- Have hand washing protocols before and after meals. Hand washing should be done with soap and water because hand sanitizers are not sufficient for removing allergens.
- Assign staff trained in the administration of epinephrine as monitors in the food service area, as appropriate.
- Provide ready access to epinephrine in an accessible, secure (locked) area.
- Implement risk reduction strategies for the school bus, during extracurricular activities, on field trips, during, before, and after school activities, and at sporting events.
- Reinforce rules and expectations regarding bullying, including bullying of students with food allergies.

See the [\*\*DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis webpage\*\*](#) for resources and more information.

# Training for School Staff on Food Allergies, Anaphylaxis, and Emergency Response

Education is key in identifying and supporting students with life-threatening food allergies in the school setting. A tiered approach to training can prepare all staff in identifying and providing emergency care to students with a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction. A school may establish a training schedule to ensure that all staff are prepared to recognize and manage a life-threatening anaphylactic reaction. The tiered approach includes an “awareness training” for all school staff and more “comprehensive training” for other staff. The campus food allergy management team (if established by the campus) and staff members responsible for the care of individual students would receive the comprehensive training. Resources and information about free and fee-based training are found at the [\*\*DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis webpage\*\*](#).

Awareness training gives an overview of food allergies and anaphylaxis, including the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction, as well as information on the treatment of anaphylaxis.

Training should include information about the most common food allergens, hazards on using food for instructional purposes, and the importance of environmental controls to protect the health of students at risk for food allergy related anaphylaxis. The training should provide guidance on how to respond when a child shows signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction to food, implement the Food Allergy Action Plan or Emergency Action Plan (including needed skills to administer epinephrine), and notify the local EMS using the school’s emergency response policy and procedures. This generalized training gives an overview for all staff. It also gives basic instruction on how to identify and take

emergency action if an allergic reaction occurs.

More comprehensive training may be conducted with the campus food allergy management team (if established), interested parents, and other school staff responsible for the care of individual students. This training is more detailed and may include, but is not limited to,



more in-depth information on the following topics (see the [\*\*DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis webpage\*\*](#)):

- Identifying students at risk for anaphylaxis and planning for students that do not have epinephrine at school;
- Reviewing signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis;
- Implementing Food Allergy Action Plan or Emergency Action Plan, including training to administer and store epinephrine;
- Developing and implementing Individualized Health Care Plans and 504 Plans;
- Identifying communication procedures for initiating emergency protocols, including substitute staff;
- Identifying environmental control measures to reduce the risk of exposure to a food allergen, including safe food handling, handwashing, and cleaning procedures;
- Working with local EMS; and
- Debriefing after an anaphylactic reaction and continued monitoring of the food allergy management plans on the campus.

# Review of Policy and Procedures after an Anaphylactic Reaction

To stay current with managing food allergies in the school setting, policies and administrative regulations should be reviewed and updated at least annually. The review may include looking at the following information:

- Current science on managing food allergies in the school setting;
- School district's annual incident report summaries;
- Current policies and administrative procedures; and
- Recommendations from the campus food allergy management team (if established) or the local SHAC.

Reviewing policies and procedures for alignment with current statute, rules, and evidence-based practice can help ensure that the most current information is used to care for students with food allergies.

For students who have experienced an allergic reaction at school, additional review will help promote safety when the child returns to school. The approach taken by the school depends on the severity of the reaction, the student's age, and whether their classmates witnessed the event. If a child who has had a moderate to severe reaction is preparing to return to school, the superintendent's designee, the campus food allergy management team (if established), or both, may want to work with the student's parents to collect and review information. They can carry out the following activities to prepare for the child's return to the classroom.



- Identify, if possible, the source of allergen exposure and take steps to prevent future reactions.
- Review accurate and updated information on the allergic reaction, including any new medication(s) which would require new consent forms to be signed by the parents.

- Identify and interview those who were involved in the emergency care of the student and those who witnessed the event.
- Meet with school staff to dispel rumors and review administrative regulations.
- Provide factual information to parents of other classroom student students that complies with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and does not identify the individual student.
- If the allergic reaction is thought to have been caused from food provided by the school food service, work with the school food service department to determine what potential food item was served, consumed, or both. Also determine how to reduce risk in the cafeteria by reviewing food labels, minimizing cross-contamination, and other strategies.
- Review of the Food Allergy Action Plan or Emergency Action Plan, Individualized Health Care Plan the 504 Plan, or all three, and amend to address any changes that were made by the student's healthcare provider.
- If an epinephrine auto-injector was used during the reaction, ensure that the parent or guardian replaces it with a new one.

In the rare but plausible event of a fatal reaction, the school's crisis plan for dealing with the death of a student should be implemented. Mental health professionals and healthcare providers with knowledge about food allergies should be on hand to answer questions that may arise.

# Conclusion

Food allergies require long-term, often lifelong treatment to prevent reactions and promote symptom management. Health professionals and nurses play a key role in sharing information about food allergies in schools to parents, peers, and staff.<sup>22</sup>

Given the increasing prevalence of food allergies in children and as children transition into the school setting, schools can play a major role to help parents. School can implement policies and administrative regulations that promote the physical and emotional health of children with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis. There are many resources available to help schools develop policies and regulations that help promote safety for all children (see the [\*\*DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis webpage\*\*](#) for additional resources).

The resources available on the DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis webpage are intended to serve as samples. They are not required to be implemented by school boards or school districts. In addition, school boards should consider local policies, practices, and available resources in developing the policy and administrative regulations related to children with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis. School districts should consult with their local attorney in developing district policies and administrative regulations.



# Legislative Guidelines

The following federal and state legislation and administrative rules should be considered by school districts when developing or updating school policy and administrative regulations related to children with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis. It should be noted that a life-threatening food allergy is recognized as a disability by the United States Department of Education and United States Department of Agriculture.



## Federal Legislation

- [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#)
- [Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments of 2008](#)
- [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#)
- [United States Department of Agriculture Public Law 111-296, "Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010"](#)
- [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\) of 1974, \(20 U.S.C. Section 1232\)](#)
- [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 \(HIPAA\) Privacy and Security Rules](#)
- [Food Allergy Safety, Treatment, Education and Research \(FASTER\) Act of 2021](#)
- [Food Allergen Labeling and Consumer Protection Act \(FALCPA\) of 2004](#)

## State Legislation

### Texas Education Code

- [Section 22.052 - Administration of Medication by School District Employees or Volunteer Professionals; Immunity from Liability](#)
- [Section 25.0022 - Food Allergy Information Requested Upon Enrollment](#)

- [Section 38.015 - Self-Administration of Prescription Asthma or Anaphylaxis Medicine by Students](#)
- [Section 38.0151 - Policies for Care of Certain Students at Risk for Anaphylaxis](#)
- [Section 38.017 - Availability of Automated External Defibrillator](#)
- [Section 38.018 - Procedures Regarding Response to Cardiac Arrest](#)
- [Section 38.051 - Establishment of School-Based Health Centers](#)
- [Subchapter E- Maintenance, Administration, and Disposal of Epinephrine Auto-Injectors and Asthma Medicine](#)

## Texas Family Code

- [Section 32.001 – Consent by Non-Parent](#)
- [Section 32.002 – Consent Form](#)
- [Section 32.003 – Consent to Treatment by Child](#)

## Texas Administrative Code

- [4 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 26, Subchapter A - Texas School Nutrition Policies](#)
- [25 Texas Administrative Code Chapter 37, Subchapter U - Epinephrine Auto-Injector Policies in Schools](#)

Policies listed below are not required elements of a food allergy policy. However, school boards or charter school leadership may want to review the following local policies, if applicable, as there are opportunities to include provisions for children with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis:

- Bullying Policy,
- Consent to Medical Treatment Policy,
- Emergency Response Policy,
- Food Allergy Information Policy,
- Medication Administration Policy,
- Self-Administration of Asthma or Anaphylaxis Medication Policy,
- Unassigned Epinephrine Auto-Injector Policy, and

- Unassigned Asthma Medication Policy.

The [\*\*Texas Education Agency\*\*](#) has more information on caring for children with health issues in the school setting.

# Resources

## Department of State Health Services (DSHS)

### [dshs.texas.gov](http://dshs.texas.gov)

Improves the health, safety, and well-being of Texans through good stewardship of public resources, and a focus on core public health functions.

### DSHS Allergies and Anaphylaxis

#### [dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/allergies/](http://dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/allergies/)

Provides research, resources, and tools for schools and other entities on management of allergies and anaphylaxis.

### Friday Beat Newsletter

#### [dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/fridaybeat.shtm](http://dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/fridaybeat.shtm)

The *Friday Beat* is a weekly e-newsletter that connects those interested in school health to training, funding sources, and resources.

### Texas School Health Program

#### [dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/](http://dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/)

The Texas School Health Program envisions a Texas where all children are healthy, ready to learn and prepared to make healthy lifelong choices.

### Texas School Health Advisory Committee

#### [dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/shadvise/](http://dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/shadvise/)

Provides assistance in establishing a leadership role for DSHS in the support for and delivery of coordinated school health programs and school health services.

### Stock Epinephrine Advisory Committee

#### [dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/seac/](http://dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth/seac/)

In response to [Senate Bill 66](#), 84th Legislature, Regular Session, 2015, the Stock Epinephrine Advisory Committee (SEAC) was formed to examine and review the administration of epinephrine auto-injectors to a person experiencing an anaphylactic reaction on a school campus.

# Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE)

[foodallergy.org/](http://foodallergy.org/)

Supports individuals with food allergies with educational resources and advocacy to improve awareness around food allergies and treatment.

# Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

## Food Allergies

[cdc.gov/healthyschools/foodallergies/index.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/foodallergies/index.htm)

Provides guidelines research, and resources for schools on management and prevention of food allergies and anaphylaxis.

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*dshs.texas.gov/schoolhealth*