

Food Allergy Policy

Intent

Fargo Public Schools is committed to the safety and health of all students. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students with food allergies;
- Reduce the likelihood of severe or potentially life-threatening allergic reactions;
- Ensure a rapid and effective response in the case of a severe or potentially life-threatening allergic reaction; and
- Protect the rights of food allergic students to participate in all school activities.

Rationale

The level of sensitivity and the type and severity of reactions vary considerably among individuals with food allergies. Therefore, the school's approach to preventing and treating food allergies must be tailored to those individual's needs. At the same time, an undiagnosed student may experience an allergic reaction to food for the first time while at school and any allergic reaction can turn-life threatening. Therefore, the school's approach must also be comprehensive.

Definitions and Background Information

Anaphylaxis is an acute allergic reaction that affects more than one system of the body. It is a life-threatening event. If someone exhibits difficulty breathing, drop in blood pressure, or symptoms in more than one body system (cutaneous, respiratory, gastrointestinal, or cardiovascular) after possible exposure to an allergen, it should be considered anaphylaxis. Medical attention and treatment should be sought immediately.

Emergency Care Plan (ECP) means a set of procedural guidelines that provides specific directions about what to do in a particular emergency situation.

Epinephrine (also known as adrenaline) is the treatment of choice to prevent or treat anaphylaxis. It can help reverse the symptoms and prevent progression to other symptoms. It should be given immediately. A delay in treatment with epinephrine can be fatal.

Epinephrine auto-injector (sometimes called EpiPen) is a device that is used for the automatic injection of epinephrine into the human body.

Food allergy is an abnormal, adverse reaction to a food that is triggered by the body's immune system. The immune system responds to an otherwise harmless food as if it was harmful, resulting in the release of various chemicals, including histamines. The most common food allergies are to peanuts, tree nuts, milk, soy, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, and wheat.

Food allergy symptoms are manifestations of the allergic reaction in various parts of the body. Symptoms may affect:

- the cutaneous system (skin inflammation, tingling, itching, hives, rash, swelling of the lips, tongue, and/or throat):

- the respiratory system (runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, coughing, wheezing, difficulty breathing);
- the gastrointestinal tract (abdominal cramps, vomiting, diarrhea); and
- the cardiovascular system (drop in blood pressure, dizziness, lightheadedness, heartbeat irregularities, fainting, shock).

Symptoms can begin immediately upon or up to two hours after, exposure to an allergen. Some individuals exhibit symptoms followed by a second phase of symptoms two to four hours later. If more than one system is affected, it is considered anaphylaxis.

Emergency Care Plans

In all schools in Fargo Public Schools, an Individual Emergency Care Plan shall be developed for each student identified with any food allergy with potentially serious health consequences. The school nurse/teacher will develop the ECP in collaboration with the student's health care provider, the parents/guardians of the student, the school dietitian, and the student (if appropriate). The parents/guardians will submit a Special Menu Requirement form signed by a physician to the school, if appropriate. This shall be done prior to entry into school or immediately thereafter for students previously diagnosed with an allergy; it should be done immediately after the diagnosis for students already enrolled who are newly diagnosed with an allergy. These plans should include both preventive measures to help avoid accidental exposure to allergens and emergency measures in case of exposure.

Depending on the nature and extent of the student's allergy, the measures listed below may be necessary in the student's protocol plan, but are not limited to:

- Posting additional signs (e.g. in classroom entryways);
- Prohibiting the sale of particular food items in the school;
- Designating special tables in the cafeteria;
- Prohibiting particular food items from certain classrooms and/or the cafeteria;
- Completely prohibiting particular food items from the school or school grounds;
- Educating school personnel, students, and families about food allergies; and/or
- Implementing particular protocols around cleaning surfaces touched by food products, washing of hands after eating, etc.

These measures shall be taken in accordance with the Fargo Public Schools wellness policy and food safety policy.

School Protocol

In all schools, the principal/school administrator, in coordination with the school nurse/teacher/dietitian shall implement a protocol, consistent with this policy and with the ECPs, providing food allergic students with protections during the school day. The protocols shall be reviewed and updated at least annually, as well as after any serious allergic reaction has occurred at school or at a school-sponsored activity.

Posting of Signs

In all schools, signs may be posted in a conspicuous place in the classroom and cafeteria, advising that there are students with allergies to peanut/tree-nuts.

Staff Training

In all schools, the principal/school administrator shall identify school personnel who might be involved in managing an emergency in a school, including anaphylaxis. Training shall be provided for these personnel on the signs and symptoms of anaphylactic shock, proper epinephrine auto-injector administration, adverse reactions, accessing the “911” emergency medical system, and preparation for movement and transport of the student. At all times during normal school hours at on-site school-sponsored activities, at least one person other than the certified school nurse must be trained and responsible for the administration of the epinephrine auto-injector, subject to Good Samaritan provisions. These personnel shall review emergency protocols on an annual basis.

If trained school personnel are not available, any willing person may administer the epinephrine auto-injector. Good Samaritan provisions apply.

Communication

In all schools in Fargo Public Schools, the principal/school administrator shall ensure all school employees and other adults who may be involved in the care of a student diagnosed with a food allergy shall be informed of the ECP, as appropriate. These individuals should understand and consistently follow plans and protocols, be able to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction, know what to do in an emergency, and work with other school staff to eliminate the use of food allergens in the allergic student’s snacks and meals, educational tools, arts and crafts projects, or incentives.

Parents/caregivers will be informed by the school about their rights and responsibilities regarding ECPs for food allergic students. They will be given clear guidance to help them follow the measures stipulated in these plans (e.g. avoiding peanut/tree-nut-based products in snacks or lunches).

The principal/school administrator shall work with the transportation coordinator to ensure that school buses are equipped with required communication devices and that drivers are properly trained to recognize symptoms of all allergic reactions and know what to do in case of an emergency. A no eating policy should be enforced, with appropriate exceptions made to accommodate diabetic students and others with special needs.

Self-Management

In all schools in Fargo Public Schools, each student at risk for anaphylaxis shall be allowed to carry an epinephrine auto-injector with him/her at all times, if appropriate. If this is not appropriate, the epinephrine auto-injector shall be kept in a conspicuous place in the classroom, cafeteria, physical education facility, health room and/or other areas where it is most likely to be used, with reasonable safeguards in place to ensure its safekeeping. A medically identified student may self-administer the epinephrine auto-injector, if appropriate.

Emergency Protocols and Standing Orders

In the event of an episode of anaphylaxis, the principal/school administrator shall verbally notify the student’s parents/guardians as soon as possible or delegate someone to notify them. Following the episode, the school shall document the incident and file it in the student health record.

Allergy Bullying

All threats or harassment of students with food allergies will be taken very seriously and will be dealt with in accordance with the Fargo Public Schools bullying policy.

Confidentiality

Pursuant to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA), the *Rules and Regulations for School Health Programs* (R16-21-SCHO), and other statutes and regulations, the confidentiality of students with food allergies shall be maintained, to the extent appropriate and as requested by the student's parent/caregivers.

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