

**Recommendations for Managing
Students' and Staff Members'
Environmental Needs Relative to Allergies
Within the Commack School District Learning Environments**

Report Submitted by

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for Pupil Personnel Services**

Overview

The Commack Allergy Committee was created to address the issues faced by students, parents and staff members relative to the needs of persons struggling with significant food and other allergies within the public school environment.

In the fall of 2014, steering committee made up of the Assistant Superintendent for PPS, the district physician, the lead nurse and one parent was charged with the following:

- Identify areas of most significant concern
- Develop goals/charge for subcommittees
- Review recommendations of subcommittees
- Develop concise and specific district wide practices and protocols
- Disseminate identified protocols and practices for each level for full implementation for September 2015.

The steering committee identified district-wide alignment of practices and protocols; effective home/school communication and sensitivity toward students who need accommodations as the three most significant issues to be addressed.

Three sub committees were formed to gather information concerning current and best practices relative to each group's population of focus (primary, intermediate and secondary). Primary and intermediate subcommittees were chaired by a school principal; the secondary committee was co-chaired by a middle and high school assistant principal. One school nurse, teachers, mental health professionals and parents completed each subcommittee.

Each subcommittee defined their own meeting and work schedule with the understanding that proposals were due to the steering committee by March 1, 2015.

Subcommittees were charged with the following tasks:

- Collect information regarding current practices for meeting the needs of students and staff members that included but was not limited to the following:
 - Paperwork
 - Field Trips
 - Lunchrooms
 - Classroom protocols
 - Emergency procedures
 - Training of school personnel
 - Communication with families
 - Sensitivity to the emotional needs of students
- Identify the most desired practices for each level (primary, intermediate, secondary).

- Develop a concise report with specific recommendations and submit this to the steering committee by March 1, 2015

Findings and Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below were made by the Allergy Committee Steering Committee. These were made after careful consideration of the recommendations of each subcommittee with attention to the original goals of alignment, communication and sensitivity.

NOTE: The use of the term “severe allergy/allergies” is used throughout this document. For purposes of this document, severe is defined as any allergy that is life - threatening and for which the student has been prescribed Epinephrine.

District –Wide Recommendations

Notification of student/staff member allergy

- Parent/Guardian Responsibilities
 - It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian of the student or the staff member her/himself to notify the school nurse by the first day of school (classes) of any allergies that require accommodations within the school environment. **Parents and staff members are strongly encouraged to notify the district of such needs as far in advance (i.e. spring preceding start of new school year) as possible.**
 - Notification must include current (within one year) documentation from the treating physician clearly stating the following:
 - all food or other items to which the individual is allergic
 - allergy levels*

***It is understood that not all physicians will be able to supply these due to testing required. However, for individuals reporting life threatening allergies and with significant requests for accommodations, detailed information from the treating physician is necessary.**

- whether Epinephrine is prescribed and the dates such treatment has been required in the past
 - **It is the parent’s responsibility to supply the school with the student’s Epinephrine (two injectors/doses are required for students who do NOT have provider orders to self-carry and self-administer and one for students who DO have orders to self-carry and self-administer).**
- The parent or staff member has the right to request a Section 504 Accommodation Plan if there is a documented allergy that requires accommodations in order for that individual to have equal access to the school/workplace. The building administrator will facilitate a 504

Committee meeting to develop an appropriate Accommodation Plan. If the individual declines the 504 Accommodation Plan, they must meet with the school nurse and building administrator to develop a Health Plan for the individual.

- School Responsibilities
 - It is the responsibility of the school to notify the staff, by the first day of school (classes)* of any student who has severe allergies and the protocols and procedures to maintain a safe school environment for that student. Other allergies and health conditions are also reviewed with school personnel by the school nurses.

****This presumes that the parent/guardian has notified the school prior to the first day of school/classes. In the event that the parent has not notified the school prior to the first day or that the student begins school after the first day, the school will notify the staff within twenty-four (24) hours of receiving such notification.***

- A student with a health issue of any kind is “flagged” on the teacher’s class roster (K-12). Any teacher with such a flag on his/her roster is required to see the school nurse to have health issues explained and be given a copy of any written protocol for specific students. Each teacher is required to sign documentation that the student’s needs have been explained.
- If a student has a 504 Accommodation Plan he/she has an additional “flag” on the roster. The teacher is responsible for opening the plan (this is accomplished by simply clicking the icon on the roster); reading the plan in its entirety and following all identified mandates and protocols outlined therein.
- Within the teacher’s planning file for substitute teachers, any student with a health issue is identified. The necessary safety protocols are also identified within the substitute folder. This includes the location of the class Emergency Kit.

Food in the Schools (District – Wide)

- For any event in a Commack School which includes the serving of food items **for lunch** the food items will be supplied by the company currently providing the school lunch program. No other food vendors will supply food items for any school **lunch** activity. Additionally, for any such event, the menus will be supplied to all participants via school backpack news at least one week in advance of the event. The school lunch company will post the items and the ingredients on their website.

- Food items and/or food containers are not to be used in any classrooms for instructional purposes. This includes the use of food items as manipulatives and/or rewards*. This also includes the making/baking/creating of food items as part of lessons and units of study unless in a FACS class or Functional Academics class. Teachers are to use other instructional materials and activities to help motivate students.

****This excludes specific cases in which food items as primary reinforcers are approved elements of a student's BIP. The use of such primary reinforcers is limited to the special 6:1:2 and 8:1:2 classes***

- If a special birthday snack is sent in from home, it is to be a prepackaged food item with the ingredients clearly labeled. This practice is to be followed in ALL classrooms within the school district.
 - Parents/Guardians of students with food allergies are responsible for providing the classroom teacher with a list of "safe" prepackaged food items for the student by the first day of school (classes). ***If the birthday prepackaged food is on the approved list provided by parents, the student will be allowed to share that snack with the birthday child.***
 - Parents/Guardians of students with food allergies are responsible to maintain a collection of "safe food snacks" at school in the event that the celebration snack is not something the student can eat.
 - A list of birthday celebration days is to be provided to all parents in the classroom within the first month of school (classes) beginning. This will allow students with dietary issues to bring their own "safe" snack from home on the identified day.
- Communicating with Parents/Guardians
 - Each elementary principal will send a letter in the late summer that outlines food procedures (i.e. prepackaged etc.) previously outlined. This letter will be the same throughout all six elementary schools.
 - When a student with a severe food allergy is assigned to a specific classroom, the families of that class will receive a separate and specific letter. This letter will be the same format in each of the six elementary buildings and will include the following :
 - notification that a child with a severe food allergy is a member of the classroom family
 - a list of specific foods to be avoided (as per parent/guardian notification)
 - reminder that any special birthday celebration snack must be a prepackaged food with all ingredients listed
 - Parents/Guardians of students with severe food allergies will be invited to speak briefly at fall Open House/Back to School Night presentations within the classrooms.

Lunchroom Procedures (K-5)

- Elementary lunch monitors will be provided with a list of students from each class with severe food allergies. Student pictures (from student management system) will be provided.
- A Safe Food Table will be provided at each lunch session. ***Any elementary child who has been identified by parents as having a severe food allergy (Epinephrine prescribed) will be seated at the Safe Food Table.****
 - The table is to be cleaned before the first lunch period and after each lunch period.
 - Cleaning materials (cloth, bucket etc) will be specific to that table and not used for other tables.
 - The table is to be closed and moved to the side and is not to be used for any other activities before, during or after school.
 - A specific lunch monitor will be assigned to that table only who will:
 - check which children need that table and which food is to be avoided;
 - monitor the children so that children with conflicting “safe food” needs are kept separated;
 - encourage students with safe foods to join classmates;
 - supervise the table so that there is no sharing of food and that children maintain appropriate, safe personal space.

**Any parent who does not want his/her severely allergic child to be seated at the Safe Food Table is to contact the building principal who will explain the procedures to make this request formally.*
- Students with severe food allergies are identified through Infinite Campus for School Lunch providers.
- All students will be encouraged to clean their hands after eating.
- Each lunch room will have a clearly marked Emergency Kit. This is to be in a marked location easily accessible to staff and will contain the following:
 - list of all students (with pictures) severe with food allergies and/or any other serious allergy (i.e. insect sting)
 - foods to be avoided next to each name/other allergy or condition listed
 - clear emergency procedures/protocols for each child
 - Epinephrine injector with directions
- Each playground/recess venue will have the same emergency kit. This kit will be carried to the recess site by a designated monitor who will be identified to all other monitors. This monitor will also be given a walkie-talkie that is able to communicate with the main office and the nurse.

Training for lunch/recess monitors will be provided by the school principal or his/her designee and a health care professional prior to the first day students are in the building.

Lunchroom Procedures (Secondary)

- Each lunchroom will have a clearly marked Emergency Kit. This is to be in a marked location easily accessible to staff and will contain the following:
 - list of all students (with pictures) with severe (Epinephrine) food allergies and/or any other serious allergy (i.e. insect sting).
 - foods to be avoided next to each name/other allergy or condition listed
 - clear emergency procedures/protocols for each student
 - Epinephrine injector with directions
- Each recess venue in the middle school will have the same emergency kit. This kit will be carried to the recess site by a designated monitor who will be identified to all other monitors. This monitor will also be given a walkie-talkie that is able to communicate with the main office and the nurse.
- A Safe Food Table will be provided at parent and/or student request at the secondary level.
 - In the middle school, a specific lunch room monitor will supervise that table as needed (dependent on student usage).
 - The table is to be cleaned before the first lunch period and after each lunch period.
 - Cleaning materials (cloth, bucket etc) will be specific to that table and not used for other tables.
 - The table is to be closed and moved to the side and is not to be used for any other activities before, during or after school.

Signage

- Posters relative to signs of anaphylaxis; first aid for anaphylaxis and use of Epinephrine will be posted throughout the schools.
- Placards will be posted at each phone in every room in every building. These will state the following (placards will be consistent throughout the district):
 - location of that phone (room number/wing)
 - nurse phone number
 - main office phone number
- Any elementary classroom to which a student with a severe food allergy is assigned will be identified and no outside activities that include the use or making of food will be allowed in that classroom. A sign proclaiming that room as a “Safe Food Zone”* will be posted. Un-Safe food will be listed. The signs will be consistent throughout the district.
- At the secondary level, in each classroom, two desks will be identified as “NO FOOD” desks. No food of any kind can be eaten at that desk at any time. This

will provide any student for whom it is necessary, assurance that a safe desk is available in each room.

- Any secondary classroom to which a student with a specific severe food allergy is assigned will be identified and no outside activities that include the use or making of food will be allowed in that classroom. A sign proclaiming that room as a “Safe Food Zone”* will be posted. Un-Safe foods will be listed. The signs will be consistent throughout the district.

***The use of the Safe Food Zone signs is meant to serve as another means to limit the presence of food allergens in specific areas in the schools. It should in no way be interpreted as assurance that there are no such allergens present. The Commack School District cannot provide a guarantee that such allergens are not or have never been present.**

Epinephrine

- Any student (K-12) with an Epinephrine prescription is **required to provide the school nurse with the prescribed injector** (i.e. EpiPen, EpiPen Jr., AuviQ, AuviQ Jr.) before the first day of school (classes) and is responsible to pick that medication up on the last day of school (classes). Elementary students or secondary students who do not have provider orders to self-carry and self-administer must **provide the nurse with two injectors**.
- Emergency Epinephrine Kits will be placed in common areas of the buildings such as the auditoriums and gymnasiums.
- If a student with a severe allergy is assigned to an elementary classroom, a Classroom Emergency Kit will be kept in that classroom. This will contain the following:
 - name and picture of student(s) with severe allergies and the emergency protocols for each
 - Epinephrine

Social/Emotional Considerations

By instituting the above protocols, Commack families will become partners with the school district to ensure the health and safety of all students and staff members. By eliminating food-centric instructional practices completely, families of students and students themselves will no longer be forced to “be the bad guy” each year. Now, the same rules apply to all. Furthermore, it helps us as a community to foster healthy choices that do not necessarily center on food treats. When food treats are a part of a celebration the protocols ensure that all have equal access and opportunity for full participation.

As Character Education continues to be a vital part of our district curriculum, understanding and respecting the needs of others continues to be a critical lesson.

Education

- Elementary students will continue to be taught with developmentally appropriate materials and lessons to foster an understanding of allergies and health issues.
- All Commack staff members and bus personnel will be provided with a general overview of allergic reactions, especially anaphylaxis, and the appropriate first aid. This will include the use of Epinephrine injectors.
- Monitors assigned to lunchroom and recess areas will be given training specific to the students in their assigned periods.
- Any teachers assigned students with severe allergies and/or health conditions will be given additional training relative to the needs of those students.

Medical Professionals /Staffing

- If a student identified with severe allergies and/or medical conditions is assigned to attend a field trip, a nurse will attend. This should be included in the budget planning for such trips.
- For any large scale or whole school events (outside the school day) that are planned and facilitated by the school district, a nurse will be in attendance. This should be included in the budgeting for such events.

Committee Members

Steering Committee:

Dr. Eugene Gerardi, School District Physician (Allergist)
Mrs. Susan Mirman, District Parent
Paula Saltzman, Lead Nurse, Commack District
Mrs. Amy Ryan, Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services

Primary Subcommittee

Brian Simpson (Chair), Indian Hollow Principal
Deborah Bradley (School Nurse)
Amanda Burke (Parent)
Lori Gary (School Psychologist)
Carolann Lally (Teacher)
Tara Terry (Parent)
Mindy Zimmerman (Teacher)

Intermediate Subcommittee

Paul Schmelter (Chair), BIS Principal
Kathy Adcock (Parent)
Stephanie Hludzinski (Parent)
Catherine Myer (Parent)
Helen Rotos (Parent)
Diana Bishop (School Nurse)
Linda Hansen (Psychologist)
Michale Rose (Social Worker)
Patricia Tappin (Teacher)
Nicole Ryback (Teacher)
Heather New(Teacher)

Secondary Subcommittee

Matthew Keltos (Co-Chair), Assistant Principal CHS
Christina Sapienza (Co-Chair) Assistant Principal CMS
Christine Wright, School Nurse
Kimberly Radziul, Social Worker
Joseph Verfenstein, Teacher
Kim Morello, School Nurse
Krystal Barrera, Teacher

Michelle Woythaler, Teacher
Nancy Neibloom, Counselor
Christine Aprhamian, Parent