

# Surry County Schools

## Allergy Awareness Plan

Revised January 13, 2017

## **DISCLAIMER**

Surry County School system is allergen aware. The school system cannot under any conditions be allergy free.

## **INTRODUCTION AND HISTORY**

Food allergy is a growing concern in the United States and creates a challenge for our schools. Approximately 8 percent of school-aged children have a significant food allergy and may be at risk for anaphylaxis, a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction. Currently, there are no medications that cure food allergy. Therefore, strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent allergic reactions. Deaths have occurred in schools because of delays in recognizing symptoms and not responding promptly or effectively. Plans that focus on food allergy education, awareness, avoidance and immediate treatment of allergic reactions are critical to saving lives.

Food allergen awareness is a universal requirement for school nutrition staff. Foods that cause allergic reactions or food allergens can cause major problems to our students if they are unaware of what the food ingredients are within our foods. Records are maintained for three years. Recipe and nutrition facts are updated continuously/as needed.

Managing food allergens requires that **all** employees become “aware” of the procedures and techniques necessary to properly deal with food allergens every day. Cafeteria employees, office staff, supervisors, and our student volunteers must be aware that even trace amounts of a food allergen can cause allergic reactions for some students.

All School Nutrition personnel need to be aware of food allergens in our food products. All staff must be aware of allergens and the effect they have on our students. The school nurse receives and processes student Medical Statements from parents and will notify the School Nutrition Managers of any allergies or intolerances. It is important that all of our students and parents understand that we are aware of food allergens and are concerned about them.

## **ALLERGY OVERVIEW**

A food allergy is an exaggerated response by the immune system to a food that the body mistakenly identifies as being harmful. A food allergy is a reaction to the food protein. Once the immune system decides that a particular food is harmful, it produces specific antibodies to that particular food. The next time the individual eats that food, the immune system releases moderate to massive amounts of chemicals, including histamine, to protect the body. These chemicals trigger a cascade of allergic symptoms that can affect the respiratory system, gastrointestinal tract, skin and cardiovascular system.

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In some people symptoms appear in only one body system, while in others symptoms appear in several systems. These symptoms can range from mild to severe and may be life threatening depending on the individual and type of exposure.

### **TOP EIGHT FOOD ALLERGENS**

Many foods may be food allergens but according to the Food and Drug Administration more than 90% of the food allergen incidents in the United States are caused by just eight foods. The remaining 10% of food allergen incidents in the U.S. are caused by hundreds of other foods.

The “top eight” food allergens are listed below:

- 1) peanuts
- 2) tree nuts (e.g. almonds, pecans, walnuts)
- 3) crustaceans/shellfish (e.g. crab, lobster, shrimp)
- 4) eggs
- 5) milk and dairy Products
- 6) fish (e.g. bass, flounder, cod)
- 7) soy/soybeans
- 8) wheat/gluten

***Although eight foods are responsible for the most reactions, it is important to remember that ANY food can cause a serious allergic reaction.***

Peanut and tree nuts typically cause the most severe allergic reactions. Allergies to peanut, tree nuts, fish and shellfish are often considered to be life-long.

Ingestion of the food allergen is the principal route of exposure that leads to allergic reactions. For sensitized individuals, ingestion of even very minute amounts of foods can, in certain instances, result in fatal reactions without rapid intervention. If children with life-threatening food allergies touch the allergens and then put their fingers to their eyes, nose or mouth, the exposure becomes ingested and may cause anaphylaxis. The quantity of food necessary to trigger an allergic reaction may depend upon multiple variables. Each individual’s level of sensitivity may fluctuate over time.

Food allergy fact sheets are available at: [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

### **KEY MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS**

#### **Awareness, Prevention, and Emergency Response:**

The focus of this management plan is Awareness (education), Prevention, and Emergency Response. By working together, parents, students, medical professionals, school

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district team members, and community partners can create a safe and nurturing environment for all of our students, including those with life-threatening allergies.

**Awareness (Education):**

Students, staff, and the community become more aware of the impact of life threatening allergies and a better understanding of its impact and implication to students and families who have to live with this condition. It also means that key school team members know who in their school community has a life-threatening allergy. Education is the key to awareness.

**Prevention:**

Prevention addresses the need to limit exposure of students with life threatening allergies to their allergen. The school district has reviewed and will continue to update key procedures and forms that help protect students. One of the key ways to help prevent allergy problems in school is for the parent to ensure that all the necessary health information and forms are updated each year.

Another key to prevention is for the family to provide meals and snack items from home. Local allergists recommend this, and foods provided from home offer the safest option for students with life-threatening allergies.

**Emergency Response:**

Unfortunately, total avoidance is simply not possible because many of the offending substances are so widespread or hidden in our daily environment. That is why Emergency Response (being prepared and ready) is so important. Each child with a life-threatening allergy will have an Emergency Action Plan in place. Immediate medical treatment is critical to saving a life. **Call 911, and follow the plan.**

**Remember:**

- You are never alone. It takes a team to ensure the best for our students. Help is usually a phone call away.
- Prohibiting food does not work because they create a false sense of security. Today, processed foods contain trace amounts of food items that are not always identified on the food label. That is why we do not use the term peanut or allergen free. The best plan is to educate our school community about the issues that face students with life threatening allergies.
- Special events/Non-routine days. The greatest risk for a life threatening allergic reaction exists when the normal routine is broken. Examples are classroom parties, field trips, a substitute teacher, and after school events.
- Be Prepared. Always have the Emergency Action Plan (EAP) available and think ahead to prevent possible exposures to a food allergen.
- Symptoms vary greatly. Call 911 when anaphylactic symptoms occur or if ingestion is suspected. Use emergency medication (i.e. Epi-Pen) if needed and follow the EAP. Do not be afraid or hesitant to call 911. They are the experts and are there to help.

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## **PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES**

### **Key Points:**

- Be safe, not sorry! Take all complaints from children with food allergies very seriously. It is important to respect the needs and rights of each student, especially those covered under Section 504.
- A child with a life threatening food allergy should NEVER eat a food item that has not been approved by their parent or guardian.
- Be prepared! Know your plan!
- Call 911. In the event a student has an allergic reaction at school, call 911 and administer emergency medication (i.e. antihistamine and Epi-Pen) as ordered by the student's physician. Key staff members should be trained to use emergency medications and know the location of those medications at school and on any special function. **If epinephrine (Epi-Pen) is used, the student should be taken to the hospital for evaluation even if the allergic reaction symptoms subside.** The school principal and school first aid provider should be notified as soon as feasible. 911 should be called for all suspected food allergy reactions. No one can predict how a reaction will progress. A mild reaction can blossom into a full blown anaphylactic reaction very quickly or over several hours. A reaction can also appear to subside or even appear to be under control and can blossom again into a more severe reaction (experts recommend an observation of approximately 4 hours to monitor that the reaction has been resolved).
- Cross contamination. It only takes a trace amount of the food protein to cause an allergic reaction. To prevent exposure to an allergen, hand washing and washing of surfaces (tables, chairs, mixing bowls, etc.) where an allergen has been used is necessary. Soap and warm water are most effective for cleaning surfaces.

## **AWARENESS (Education)**

### **Communication Process:**

Communication is ongoing and needs to be specifically focused on each of the key audiences that are within and outside of the school district. Contact the Lead School Nurse, Kim Beverly (336-320-3434), the director of School Nutrition Services, Sherri Parks (336-386-8211), or the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Dr. Jeff Tunstall (336-386-8211) if you have any comments, concerns, or questions.

### **Training and Education:**

Training material and resources are available through the school nurses and the following:

- Epi Pen training with school nurse and online through Public School Works (Epi Pen auto injector use).
- The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network have excellent resources and can be contacted at 800-929-4040, and the Web address is: [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org)

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**Handwashing:**

Effective hand washing with soap and warm water is one of the simplest and most effective ways to prevent unnecessary allergen exposure to students. Regular hand washing after activities, prior to lunch, after lunch, and after recess time create a safer environment for all students.

**PREVENTION**

It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to notify and provide the following:

- Parent/guardian provides school with required medical form and information.
- Emergency Action Plan must be completed by a licensed health provider and signed by the parent/guardian.
- Medication request form(s) must be completed by licensed health provider and parent/guardian.
- Required forms should be received and reviewed by the school nurse before a student attends school.
- Medical Statement forms should be completed and submitted to the school nurse for any menu modifications to be made by the School Nutrition program.

**Afterschool Activities:**

Parents are responsible for making sure that supervising staff are aware of their child's medical concerns during after school activities and programs. The school nurse may be contacted to assist with additional accommodations and training that may be needed. Supervisors of such programs may request a health query list of student health concerns from the school office.

**Classroom Management:**

- Avoid food reinforcements whenever possible.
- Provide storage for safe snacks, provided by parents of the allergic child.
- Notify classroom parents that a student in the classroom has a severe food allergy. Parents of child with allergy should provide message they would be comfortable sending out and sign permission of release of this information.
- No sharing of food is allowed.
- Ensure science kits and classroom activities are safe for students with allergies.
- Provide education of staff with parent involvement.

**Cafeteria:**

The cafeteria can be a very intimidating place for both students with life threatening allergies and their family. Having adults who are aware of the students with allergies and their EAP's, helps to create a safer cafeteria environment.

Recommended cafeteria procedure for students with life threatening allergies:

1. Designate a table(s) preferably at the end with the least amount of traffic as an

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“Allergy Aware Zone”. Invite or encourage students who do not have a food allergy to dine with students who do have a food allergy to avoid isolating students with allergies.

2. Table and benches washed with warm soapy water by an adult prior to students with allergies attending lunch.
3. Adult in lunch room monitors students with allergies to observe for any obvious allergen containing food items.
4. Hand washing with warm soapy water before lunch and after lunch (good hygiene practices for everyone).
5. Students trained and reminded that there is no sharing of food.
6. These recommended procedures must be done in such a way as not to draw unnecessary attention to a child who has a food allergy.

**Playground:**

Attendants need to be aware of signs and symptoms of severe allergic reactions and the prompt emergency action that is necessary. Emergency medication should always be with the student.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

**Emergency Action Plan Management:**

The Emergency Action Plan (EAP)/Student Health Care Plan is processed and evaluated by the school nurse. The nurse will copy all key staff members noted at the bottom of the EAP. Key staff members must include, but are not limited to:

- Office: This copy must be kept in an office note book. The nurse will help ensure this notebook has all the current EAP's.
- Teacher and sub file: Measures are needed to provide an alert for substitutes.
- Cafeteria manager/School Nutrition Services: An Emergency Action Plan is placed in the kitchen for every child eating school provided meals with an additional copy distributed to the School Nutrition Department.
- Other building team members could include: PE specialist, first aid providers, media specialist, teacher assistants, bus drivers, etc.

**Medication Management:**

Medication management in schools must comply with Surry County Board Policy along with state and federal requirements and must be provided by the parents. Contact the Lead School Nurse, Kim Beverly (336-320-3434) or the Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Dr. Jeff Tunstall (336-386-8211).

**Field Trip Checklist:**

Surry County field trip forms and Student Health Care Plans/Emergency Action Plan should be completed prior to a field trip to assist supervising staff in preparing for emergencies that may occur. Contact the parent and school nurse regarding safety

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concerns. Extra emergency medication may be needed on field trips.

**Emergency Drills:**

It is strongly encouraged to have one practice drill scheduled yearly that addresses a medical emergency for a student with a life threatening health condition. Refer to Crisis Plan for Surry County Schools. This could be covered as a staff table discussion that addresses topics such as the location of meds, the location of the Student Health Care Plan/EAP, and the priority to call 911. Appropriate staff will have access to Epi-Pen training by the school nurse at every school.

**Monitoring District Plans:**

Annually the Director of School Nutrition Services and the School Nurse Supervisor will meet to review allergy materials and make recommendations for improving the district's allergy management systems.

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**Trust, Relationship and Understanding:**

It is important to remember that families who are dealing with life threatening allergy issues want to be heard and understood. By taking the time to listen to the unique individual concerns and addressing each of those concerns a level of trust can be built that will greatly enhance the safety and educational experience for the student. The collaborative team approach creates the best results for everyone involved.

The TEAM is made up of the parents/guardians and the key team members that can help create the safest learning environment for the student. The team could include the parent, student, principal, school nurse, classroom teacher and cafeteria manager. Each team member has specific responsibilities for creating this safe learning environment.

**Family's Responsibility:**

- Notify the school of the child's allergies.
- Work with the school team to develop a plan that accommodates the child's needs throughout the school, including in the classroom, in the cafeteria, in aftercare programs, during school-sponsored activities, as well as an Student Health Care Plan/Emergency Action Plan (EAP).
- Provide written and signed medical documentation, instructions, medications and medical orders as requested by the school nurse (including the School Nutrition Services Medical Statement).
- Provide small photo of the child to be used on the Student health care Plan/EAP (approx. 1½" x 2").
- Replace medications after use or upon expiration.
- Ensure all necessary forms are filled out accurately and updated annually.
- Educate the child in the self-management of their food allergy including:

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- Safe and unsafe food
- Strategies for avoiding exposure to unsafe foods
- Symptoms of allergic reactions
- How and when to tell an adult they may be having an allergy related problem.
- How to read food labels (age appropriate).
- Review policies/procedures and Student Health Care Plan/EAP with the school staff, the child's physician, and the child (if age appropriate) after a reaction has occurred.
- Ensure student information and necessary forms are provided if the child transfers schools at any time during the school year.
- Notify school office staff of any changes in emergency contact phone numbers.
- Notify school nurse of any changes needed on the Student Health Care Plan/emergency action plan or medication orders.
- Notify school moving. Be responsible for transfer of necessary information, paperwork and medication so your child can safely attend school.
- Share food allergy information including a copy of the EAP and medication orders with all after school programs/activities. Notify the school nurse if additional staff training is needed.
- Provide safe snacks for classroom parties and other special events.
- Provide safe meals from home, if possible. This is the safest option for a child with life threatening allergies.
- Work with School Nutrition staff to ensure safe school meal options are selected if the child will eat at school.

#### **Student's Responsibility:**

- Should not share or trade food or eating utensils with others.
- Should not eat anything with unknown ingredients or known to contain any allergen.
- Should be proactive in the care and management of their food allergies and reactions based on their developmental level.
- Should notify an adult immediately if they eat something they believe may contain the food to which they are allergic.
- Should notify an adult if they are being picked on or threatened by other students as it relates to their food allergy.

#### **Principal's Responsibility**

The building principal is the key care team coordinator that pulls together the building, district, and school community team members that can best serve the particular student and circumstance. Key responsibilities are:

- Meet with parents and LISTEN to their needs and concerns. They often have become an expert on their child's specific allergy.
- Establish a care team. The care team could include: parent, principal, teacher, student, nurse, TA, School Nutrition Manager.

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- Help parent understand possible 504 implications.
- Develop school accommodation plan: cafeteria, classroom, breakfast, lunch & snack menus, special events, parties, field trips, and science kits.
- Ensure necessary paperwork is completed/updated prior to the beginning of each year: Student Healthcare Plan/ EAP, medication forms.
- Ensure training takes place annually and as needed: Emergency medications (i.e. Epi-Pen), EAP, Accommodation Plan at school.
- Ensure medications are stored appropriately, are accessible, and staff knows where they are located.
- Ensure district procedures for special events are followed: field trip plans, parties, and special events.
- Ensure Emergency Action Plans are in designated areas.
- Ensure new staff and substitutes (Sub folder) are alerted.

### **Office Staff's Responsibility:**

- Notify school nurse and identify students with life threatening allergies.
- Explain that required forms must be returned and approved by the school nurse prior to their first day at school.
- Notify the school nurse (first), principal, and teacher immediately that a student with a life threatening allergy will be enrolling (email or call).
- Receive and review all required forms (EAP, Medication request form, and any other information the parent provides).
- Immediately inform nurse that the completed paperwork is available.
- Ensure all care plans are on file in the designated notebook/folder and easily accessible.
- Prompt entry of health codes into Power School.
- Remind substitutes who are checking in at the office, to be alert for and the location of emergency action plans and other important health related information (ie. first aid provider location and phone number).

### **Nurse's Responsibility**

The nurse is the key resource for medical direction and staff/student training. The nurse MUST be contacted as soon as a student is identified with an allergy. Key responsibilities are:

- Work with principal and parents to develop an individual healthcare plan/accommodations plan.
- Review and approve EAP and medication forms as submitted.
- Distribute EAP and medication request form to appropriate staff.
- Review EAP with key staff and provide staff training resources for "Emergency Treatment of Severe Allergic Reactions".
- Review EAP annually and update as needed. Communicate with parents and medical professionals as needed.
- Monitor emergency medication expiration dates.

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- Resource to school staff in accommodating student needs.

### **Teacher's Responsibility**

The teacher has the greatest impact on the student and classroom environment. Making the school a place where the student can be accepted is very important. Key responsibilities are:

- Understand parent and student needs.
- Call 911 first when allergy related symptoms occur or ingestion is suspected.
- Know the Emergency Action Plan and school/classroom accommodations. NOTE: All EAPs and life threatening allergy information should be easily accessible.
- Inform substitutes of the plan(s) and ensure all paperwork is current and available (sub-folder).
- Help educate students about allergies and peer pressure.
- Review/rethink lesson plans and field trips in regard to foods.
- Be prepared for special events (parties) and field trips. The greatest risk for a student to have an allergic reaction is when class activity is outside the normal routine.
- Emphasize hand washing and surface washing before and after eating or handling food.
- Train all students not to share food or eating utensils.
- Review craft and science kits/projects in regards to specific food allergies.
- Practice the Emergency Action Plan at least once as early in the school year as possible.
- Know the location of all Emergency information and medications.
- Know how medications are accessed after normal school hours and on special trips.
- Know how to contact emergency services at school or on a field trip.
  1. Call 911 immediately if you suspect an allergic reaction is occurring.
  2. Know how to contact emergency services throughout the full course of your field trip. Our Activity Buses do not have a radio on board.
  3. Is 9-1-1 available throughout the entire itinerary? If not, what is the number to dial for the local emergency response service?
  4. Be aware that your cell phone may not be operational in all areas.
  5. Know your alternatives.
- Ensure compliance with district field trip procedures and use a field trip checklist during the planning of a field trip.

### **School Nutrition Services' Responsibility**

The School Nutrition Services department can provide educational resources and access to staff that are trained in nutrition, labeling, and food production. Their role is to clearly communicate with the Principal and parent what allergens exist in the school cafeterias. Menu and Allergy resources are available on the districts web site at:

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[www.surry.k12.nc.us/pages/Surry\\_County\\_Schools/District/Child\\_Nutrition/School\\_Breakfast and Lunch Men](http://www.surry.k12.nc.us/pages/Surry_County_Schools/District/Child_Nutrition/School_Breakfast_and_Lunch_Men)

**Key responsibilities are:**

- Knowledge of all the ingredients of school food items.
- Annually review food labels.
- Participate with care team as needed.
- Prevent cross contamination of allergenic food products.
- Ensure forms parents are required to fill out are complete.
- Ensure all EAPs and or Medical Statements are easily accessible in a notebook labeled “ Food Allergies”. This information should not be accessible to students due to confidentiality.
- Make menu accommodations as needed. Seek assistance / guidance from district School Nutrition office as needed.
- Provide appropriate food substitutions that comply with Student Health Care Plan/ EAP / Medical Statement.

**RESOURCES:**

The Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN). FAAN is a great resource for current research, informational newsletter, support groups, and information of food products. Phone: 800-929-4040. Web address is: [www.foodallergy.org](http://www.foodallergy.org).

American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology. (AAAAI) - [www.aaaai.org](http://www.aaaai.org)

Asthma & Allergy Foundation of America - [www.aafa.org/](http://www.aafa.org/)

Surry County Schools School Nutrition Services. Current food allergy procedures, forms, and information available on the web at [www.surry.k12.nc.us/pages/Surry\\_County\\_Schools/District/Child\\_Nutrition](http://www.surry.k12.nc.us/pages/Surry_County_Schools/District/Child_Nutrition)