

Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies In Schools and Early Care and Education Programs



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Table 1. Recommended Practices for Reducing the Risk of Exposure to Food Allergens and Responding to Food Allergies in Schools and ECE Programs

	Classroom	Cafeteria	Transportation	School or ECE Program Events (Field Trips, Activities Before or After School)	Physical Education and Recess
School or ECE Program Policy or Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider designated allergy-friendly seating arrangements. Avoid the use of identified allergens in class projects, parties, holidays and celebrations, arts, crafts, science experiments, cooking, snacks, or rewards. Modify class materials as needed. Avoid ordering food from restaurants because food allergens may be present, but unrecognized. Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of food allergy emergency and train staff to use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider designated allergy-friendly seating during meals (open to any child eating foods free of identified allergens). Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of food allergy emergency and train staff to use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Train transportation staff in how to respond to food allergy emergencies. Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of food allergy emergency and train staff to use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When planning a field trip, find out if the location is safe for children with food allergies. Make sure that events and field trips are consistent with food allergy policies. Do not exclude children with food allergies from field trips, events, or extra-curricular activities. Invite, but do not require, parents of children with food allergies to accompany their child in addition to the regular chaperone. Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of food allergy emergency and train staff to use them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do not exclude children with food allergies from physical education or recess activities. Have rapid access to epinephrine auto-injectors in cases of food allergy emergency and train staff to use them.

Table 1. (continued)

	Classroom	Cafeteria	Transportation	School or ECE Program Events (Field Trips, Activities Before or After School)	Physical Education and Recess
Meals and Snacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use nonfood incentives for prizes, gifts, and awards. • Help students with food allergies read labels of foods provided by others so they can avoid ingesting hidden food allergens. • Consider methods (such as assigned cubicles) to prevent cross-contact of food allergens from lunches and snacks stored in the classroom. • Support parents of children with food allergies who wish to provide safe snack items for their child in the event of unexpected circumstances. • Encourage children to wash hands before and after handling or consuming food. • Include information about children with special needs, including those with known food allergies, in instructions to substitute teachers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make reasonable meal accommodations after receiving approval from a doctor or allergist through dietary orders or as stated in the child's Emergency Care Plan (ECP). For more information, see the USDA Web site.^a • With parental cooperation, create standard procedures for identifying children with food allergies. For example, a recent picture of each child could be kept in a location that is not visible to other children or the public. Procedures must follow the requirements in FERPA. (See Section 5 for more information about FERPA.) • Designate an allergen-safe food preparation area. • Provide advanced copies of menus for parents to use in planning. • Be prepared to share food labels, recipes, or ingredient lists used to prepare meals and snacks with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not allow food to be eaten on buses except by children with special needs such as those with diabetes. • Encourage children to wash hands before and after handling or consuming food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify special needs before field trips or events. • Package meals and snacks appropriately to prevent cross-contact. • Encourage children to wash hands before and after handling or consuming food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage hand washing before and after handling or consuming food.

Table 1. (continued)

	Classroom	Cafeteria	Transportation	School or ECE Program Events (Field Trips, Activities Before or After School)	Physical Education and Recess
Meals and Snacks		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep food labels from all foods served to children with allergies for at least 24 hours after servicing the food in case the child has a reaction. • Keep current contact information for vendors and suppliers so you can get food ingredient information. • Read all food labels and recheck with each purchase for potential food allergens. • Report mistakes such as cross-contact with an allergen or errors in the ingredient list or menu immediately to administrators and parents. • Wash all tables and chairs with soap and water or all-purpose cleaning agents before each meal period. • Encourage children, school staff, and volunteers to wash hands before and after handling or consuming food. 			

^a USDA Web site: www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/guidance/special_dietary_needs.pdf.

Food Allergy Management and Prevention Plan Checklist

Use this checklist to determine if your school or ECE program has appropriate plans in place to promote the health and well-being of children with food allergies. For each priority, check the box to the left if you have plans and practices in place. Develop plans to address the priorities you did not check.

You can also use the checklist to evaluate your response to food allergy emergencies. Ongoing evaluation and improvement can help you improve your plans and actions.

Review the full descriptions of the five priorities (pages 25-40) to make sure that your plans and practices are complete and that your plans for improvement will meet the needs of children, their families, administrators, and staff.

Check If You Have Plans or Procedures	Priorities for a Food Allergy Management and Prevention Plan
	1. Does your school or ECE program ensure the daily management of food allergies for individual children by:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Developing and using specific procedures to identify children with food allergies?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Developing a plan for managing and reducing risks of food allergic reactions in individual children through an Emergency Care Plan (Food Allergy Action Plan)?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Helping students manage their own food allergies? (Does not apply to ECE programs.)
	2. Has your school or ECE program prepared for food allergy emergencies by:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Setting up communication systems that are easy to use in emergencies?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making sure staff can get to epinephrine auto-injectors quickly and easily?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making sure that epinephrine is used when needed and that someone immediately contacts emergency medical services?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Identifying the role of each staff member in a food allergy emergency?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preparing for food allergy reactions in children without a prior history of food allergies?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Documenting the response to a food allergy emergency?
	3. Does your school or ECE program train staff how to manage food allergies and respond to allergy reactions by:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing general training on food allergies for all staff?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing in-depth training for staff who have frequent contact with children with food allergies?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Providing specialized training for staff who are responsible for managing the health of children with food allergies on a daily basis?
	4. Does your school or ECE program educate children and family members about food allergies by:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching all children about food allergies?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Teaching all parents and families about food allergies?
	5. Does your school or ECE program create and maintain a healthy and safe educational environment by:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creating an environment that is as safe as possible from exposure to food allergens?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Developing food-handling policies and procedures to prevent food allergens from unintentionally contacting another food?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Making outside groups aware of food allergy policies and rules when they use school or ECE program facilities before or after operating hours?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creating a positive psychosocial climate that reduces bullying and social isolation and promotes acceptance and understanding of children with food allergies?