

# **Reading Public Schools**

## **Allergy Guidelines**

### Middle Schools

#### **Guidelines and Procedures**

In order to minimize the incidence of life-threatening allergic reactions, the Reading Public Schools (RPS) will implement the following guidelines and procedures in the middle schools for all school-day activities, district-sponsored before/after-school activities, and PTO events.

#### **School Nurses**

1. RPS will make all efforts to provide full-time nurses. Because food-allergies are a health issue, potentially requiring the administration of prescription medicine (Epinephrine) in the event of an allergic reaction, the presence of a full-time nurse in each school is critical.
2. The school Principal/Nurse will serve as the lead resource in the school regarding the implementation of the guidelines in that school. The School Nurse will serve as an invaluable medical and guideline resource for other school personnel who are responsible for various aspects of the guidelines, not only in emergency situations but also on an ongoing basis.
3. Nurses will only use latex free gloves.

#### **504 Plans and Allergy Emergency Action Plans**

1. The school will maintain a 504 Plan and Allergy Emergency Care Plan (AECP) for any student identified with a potentially life-threatening allergy.
  - a. A 504 Plan is an accommodation plan for any student who has a "physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a records of such or is regarded as having such an impairment" so that they may access FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education)
  - b. An Allergy Emergency Care Plan (AECP) is a separate document, which includes the student's, name, the allergen(s), the warning signs and symptoms, what to do in case of an emergency, phone numbers of parents, doctors, and allergists.
2. The School Nurse and school principal/designee in conjunction with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) and the primary care provider/allergist, will help prepare a 504 Plan and an AEAP for any student identified with an allergy that substantially limits a major life function. The 504 Plan and AEAP will be updated and reviewed annually by the School Nurse, the principal (or designee), the student's parent(s) and primary care provider and/or allergist.
3. The 504 Plan and AEAP will be available in the nurse's office.
4. Photographs of students with life threatening allergies (LTA) should be attached to the 504 Plan and/or AECP with permission of the parents. Parents will provide the photograph.
5. The EpiPen will be stored in the Health Office. If the student carries his/her EpiPen it is recommended that it have the AEAP attached.
6. School Nurses should identify students with a life-threatening allergies or health issues, and schools should establish plans to manage dietary restrictions and/or health concerns for those students during emergency procedures (such as lockdowns, evacuations, etc.) and when town emergency services may be limited.

### **Training/Education for School Personnel**

1. The Reading Public Schools will provide training and education on the food allergy guidelines and procedures for all staff, including but not limited to administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, secretaries, food service employees, student teachers, and substitutes.
2. RPS will provide the training which will include, but not be limited to:
  - A description/definition of severe allergies and a discussion of the most common food, medication, latex and stinging insect allergies;
  - The signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis;
  - The correct use of epinephrine auto-injectors, such as an EpiPen, Auvi-Q, and Adrenallick.
  - Specific steps to follow in the event of an emergency;
  - The storage and placement of individual EpiPens and AEAPs;
  - The purpose and contents of the AEAP and 504 plans.
3. The Director of Nursing or the Principal and/or their designees will schedule the training and implement training for all appropriate employees at the start of the school year in addition to follow-up training as needed.
4. The school Principal, in consultation with the School Nurse, will notify all staff, student teachers and parents about the nature of life-threatening allergies.
5. This notification will include an explanation of the severity of the health threat and a description of signs and symptoms of which to be aware. A required meeting will be held with the administration, teachers, and the School Nurse, to discuss the various aspects of the allergic child's AEAP. All efforts will be made to complete these meetings at the start of the school year.

### **Student and Parent Education**

1. Our goal with building-based education is to raise the level of awareness about the problem of life-threatening allergies, in order that we might create a safe and supportive environment for learning for children with serious allergies. Examples of building-based education might include:
  - PTO workshop on Food Allergies;
  - Including the RPS Allergy Guidelines in all student handbooks;
  - Delivering classroom literature on allergy education/awareness.
2. A letter will be sent to all parents in August educating them on life-threatening allergies. The letter will include the protocol for classrooms and cafeteria based on the needs of students with the LTAs in the class. Guidelines will be in the student handbook.
3. The school will encourage activities to be food-free. Classroom activities involving food should follow the School Committee's Wellness Policy and all applicable guidelines. The School Nurse should be notified at least two weeks before such activity.

### **Classroom protocol**

1. All schools are "latex free." Schools are encouraged to clearly communicate this to staff, student, and community by providing examples of products that commonly contain latex (such as balloons).
2. Food related activities should be pre-approved by the Principal or designee. (In general, food-related activities should be discouraged in classrooms.) Approval requests should be made in writing at least two weeks in advance.
3. Food related activities require special thought and preparation and should only be undertaken when the Principal determines that there is educational value. In such cases, the activity and session must be prepared in cooperation with the School Nurse, and a two-week notice is required.
4. All guidelines regarding foods for consumption also apply to materials used for classroom projects. For example, any organic materials, such as play dough, bird seed, shelled peanuts, etc. should be used with caution and in consultation with the School Nurse. Special care should also be taken when using recycled materials such as milk containers, etc. since trace amounts of foods previously contained in these materials may be present.
5. If students' snacks brought from home are brought into the classroom, they must be nut free and comply with all RPS Guidelines. Snacks should *not* be shared with other students. The Principal and School Nurse should pre-approve any snack procedures and communication to families.
6. Staff are discouraged from using food as rewards for students. Celebrations or other classroom/student gatherings that involve food (such as a pizza party, class breakfast or lunch, etc.), must be pre-approved by the School Principal; and in order to comply with RPS Guidelines, any food ordered in for the event should be provided by RPS Food Services or a local vendor that is aware of the allergy guidelines and pre-approved by the Principal (in consultation with the School Nurse). Such celebrations or events involving food during the school day should be limited to no more than one per class per month.
7. All students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands after eating and/or handling food in the classroom.
8. Involving animals or animal accessories within the classroom (for instance, classroom "pets," animal visits, pet food, etc.) must be pre-approved by the Principal and School Nurse, and should be consistent with state law, school district policy, RPS Allergy Guidelines, individual student plans, and any other allergy needs of students within the school.
9. In certain circumstances, an EpiPen and AEAP will travel with the child between classes, to the playground, to the gym, and field trips at the parent's request if part of the 504.
10. The school will provide all classrooms with a working 2-way intercom and/or telephone for quick communication with the School Nurse in the event of an allergic reaction.
11. The staffing providers of teacher substitutes will train their staff on allergies and the proper use of the EpiPen.

### **Field Trip Management**

1. As field trips and buses are an extension of the classroom, all the above classroom protocols pertain to field trips as well.
2. Students may eat on the bus only with the approval of the Principal (or designee) and the supervising adult on the bus. Procedures and communication should follow district guidelines.

3. If the specifics of any field trip or off-campus activity might present unique challenges in adhering to protocols or might present allergy concerns of any kind, it is recommended that the Principal and School Nurse review all details carefully and provide all relevant information well ahead of time to all families involved
4. Whenever students travel on field trips for school, a clear plan to activate Emergency Medical Services (911) should be developed for and reviewed by all teachers and chaperones. Teachers leading the field trip should bring with them the procedure for contacting EMS. This must include the local emergency response number for the area since 911 does not patch to the local emergency response center.
5. Field trips need to be chosen carefully; no child should be excluded from a field trip due to the potential of unavoidable allergen exposure.
6. Communication to families about allergies and/or applicable reminders to pack allergen-free snacks and lunch should be included in the field trip information/permission form. Teachers and chaperones will be made aware, in consultation with the School Nurse, of life threatening allergies.
7. The AEAP, EpiPen, and medication orders should accompany the allergic student on all field trips.

### **Cafeteria Protocol**

All cafeteria protocols should include the following but not limited to the following.

- A monitoring system for the LTA children, as needed.
- An inclusive dining experience for the LTA children.
- All students and staff will be encouraged to wash their hands after lunch.

#### 1. Cafeteria Tables and Seating

Examples of Cafeteria tables/seating protocols in the middle schools currently

- A peanut free table will be provided as needed
    - This table will be monitored by supervisory and cafeteria staff.
    - These tables will be designated by a posted sign.
    - These tables will be cleaned prior to the beginning of each lunch session and again at the end of the lunch session.
2. RPS will encourage "NO FOOD TRADING" AND "NO UTENSIL SHARING" PRACTICES in all schools.
  3. Food service employees will only use latex-free gloves.
  4. The Food Services Director, will assure that cafeteria managers will be trained how to read product labels to recognize food allergens.
  5. The Food Services Director will check allergy alerts from the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) on a regular basis via email.
  6. The Food Services Director will contact manufacturers to ensure that all food sold in the schools have ingredient labels. Ingredient labels will be accumulated by the Food Services Director to maintain on file.
  7. The Food Services Director will limit the purchase and distribution of food containing peanuts and tree-nuts since they are the most life-threatening allergens.
  8. All cafeteria staff will have knowledge of food prep (re: cross contamination.)

### **PTO and Other Before/After-School Events**

1. Provide hand washing locations/stations or wipes for hands at all events.
2. All events serving food will be encouraged to provide only foods that are peanut and tree nut free.
3. Post signage if foods contain any of the eight common allergens:  
nuts, milk, eggs, gluten, soy, fish and shellfish.
4. When ordering food in for an event from local restaurant/caterer, volunteers should ask for ingredients, and indicate foods should be free of peanut and tree nut products. (Examples of foods that may contain peanuts: pizza, chili, egg rolls)
5. If food will be provided at an event, ensure that plans are in place to handle a possible emergency. Provide adequate and trained supervision and prompt access to EMS.
6. When promoting an event, be clear what food will be provided and whom to contact for more information.

### **Custodial Protocol**

1. The Director of Facilities and Food Services, prior to the start of each lunch shift or after other uses of the cafeteria, will establish a procedure to instruct the custodial staff and/or cafeteria staff to:
  - a. thoroughly clean allergen-free tables and chairs, and
  - b. sweep the floors under and around allergen-free tables and chairs
2. Separate disposable cloths and cleaning solution should be used on the allergen-free tables
3. All soaps and cleaning solutions need to be allergen-free and approved by the school district.
4. All schools will only use latex free gloves.

### **Emergency Response Protocol**

1. The Principal is responsible for creating a system-wide emergency plan for addressing life-threatening allergic reactions. This plan will be included in all food-allergy training for employees (including substitutes) and will be posted in the appropriate public places. This plan shall identify personnel who will:
  - a. Remain with the student
  - b. Assess the emergency at hand
  - c. Refer to the student's AEAP
  - d. Administer the EpiPen
  - e. Contact Emergency Response personnel (ex: 9-1-1, EMTs); when placing the call, specify that ALS (Advanced Life Services) are needed because of an allergic reaction and indicate the number on the school's outside door closest to the student
  - f. Send someone to meet the Emergency Response personnel
  - g. Notify school administration
  - h. Attend to student's classmates
  - i. Accompany student to emergency care facility

j. Notify the parent or guardian

The plan should also identify someone (usually the student's teacher and/or School Nurse) who will assist the student's re-entry into school.

2. All **cell phones** owned by the school will be pre-programmed with the phone number for the Reading Police Department (781-944-1212 or 781-944-3131) and the Reading Fire Department (781-944-1212 or 781-944-3131) to ensure speedy response. (NOTE: Most cell phones do not have a Reading prefix, therefore if one calls 911, they will get the state police barracks in Framingham.)
3. EpiPens that have been administered should be given to the EMTs upon their arrival. The EMTs will either take the EpiPen with them for potential evaluation by the Emergency Room staff or they will provide instructions for proper disposal.

### **EpiPen Protocol**

1. Whenever an EpiPen (or other epinephrine auto-injector) is administered, an Emergency Response unit (ex: 911) will be notified that an auto-injector was administered and called to the scene. Emergency personnel will evaluate the student and determine the appropriate action.
2. EpiPens (those belonging to the school and those prescribed to the students) will be available in the nurse's office and in other clearly designated locations as specified in the children's 504 plans. For example cafeteria
3. All EpiPens will be stored in an approved school container. For example, an easily identifiable red bag.
4. All EpiPen management and training will be the responsibility of the School Nurse. This will include monitoring EpiPen expirations and replacements.