

Allergies, Food Modifications, and Special Diets Guidelines

I. Purpose

- A. To identify the responsibilities of all parties involved related to allergen exposure prevention and treatment.
- B. To ensure that Washington County Public Schools (“WCPS”) employees have sufficient knowledge and training regarding potential allergens as well as the procedures in place to handle allergens, food modifications, and special diets.

II. Procedures

WCPS and Meritus Health School Health Program work cooperatively with parents and employees to ensure that students with food allergies and/or special dietary needs are served accordingly. Food allergy information and the need for special diets should be updated to reflect the current student allergy/special needs of the student and ensure that the most up to date information is on file with WCPS for the safety of all students.

III. Family Requirements

- A. Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:
 - 1. Share all allergy information with school staff including non-food allergies.
 - 2. Notify WCPS via the Medical Form for Students with Special Dietary Needs when an allergen or special dietary need is identified or any time a new allergen is identified, or a reaction to a pre-existing allergen changes. This form is available on the WCPS website (www.wcpsmd.com) through the Food and Nutrition Services page.
 - 3. Keep emergency contact information up-to-date for students with food allergies.
 - 4. Educate your student on his/her allergy. This includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Ensuring the student has an understanding of what foods contain the allergen(s).
 - b. Ensuring the student has the ability to properly read and decipher food labels to prevent exposure to the allergen(s) – or know to ask an adult to check a food label.
 - c. Ensuring that the student is capable of expressing if they are experiencing an allergic reaction.
 - 5. Acknowledge that the risk of allergen exposure in schools can be significantly reduced but not eliminated.
 - 6. Submit a completed Physician’s Medication Order Form to the school nurse where the student will be attending prior to the start of each school year or if

medically diagnosed during the school year, if a student's allergy requires administration of medication, or is potentially life threatening requiring administration of emergency medication.

7. Provide properly labeled medication in the correct dosage to be available for use in the health room or in the student's possession if permitted to self-carry in the event of an emergency. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure these medications are discarded and replaced prior to expiration.
8. Request, subject to the approval of the school nurse, to have emergency medication transported between home and school via the bus driver.
9. Request an educational presentation on the food allergy be provided to the student's classroom.

B. Student Responsibilities:

1. Should not knowingly consume products containing a known reactive allergen.
2. Should not eat foods that have not been reviewed by school staff and determined to be safe for consumption or that do not have a readable label to determine if an allergy causing agent is in the product.
3. Should refrain from trading food with others to prevent exposure to allergens.
4. Should be aware of the proper procedure for hand-washing and reducing the risk of allergen exposure via contact with food sources.
5. Inform an adult if they believe they have accidentally consumed a food containing an allergen.
6. Inform an adult if they are experiencing an allergic reaction/anaphylaxis and if they are self-carrying emergency medication.
7. Act responsibly and secure medication if permitted to self-carry emergency medication.

IV. School Requirements

A. Food Services Responsibilities:

1. Make available the Medical Form for Students with Special Dietary Needs.
2. Keep allergy and medical documentation on file in the Food and Nutrition Services administrative office and in the student's health file.
3. Develop a list of students with food allergies to determine the appropriate modification. This information must be distributed to food service staff, school health staff, administration, and other staff as deemed appropriate.
4. Inform employees about which students have life threatening allergies, the cause of the allergy, and the foods that do and may contain the allergen.
5. Confirm that the kitchen has a prepared meal for all students with modifications.
6. Verify each student purchasing a meal to ensure no potential allergens are on his/her tray.

7. Provide training to food service employees regarding food allergens, safe food handling, label reading, and safe meal substitutions for students with allergies.
 8. Educate employees on the danger of cross-contamination of foods either by hands, gloves, utensils, or surfaces.
 9. Train food service staff to ensure they are capable of recognizing and treating an allergic reaction/anaphylaxis.
 10. Make available food ingredient lists to parents, staff, and students at all times for all meals.
 11. Keep on site, in the event of a school emergency, a small supply of food that is appropriate for students with food allergies.
 12. Prevent the possibility of cross-contamination by the use of single use disposable utensils and serving trays and plates as is necessary.
- B. School Health Staff Responsibilities:
1. Provide parents with an Allergic Reaction Checklist form to complete and return when a food allergen has been identified by a parent/guardian,
 2. Determine if a student is deemed capable of carrying and self-administering the emergency medication, if ordered, upon receipt of all of the proper allergy documentation (including the Physicians Medication Order Form, Student Health/Family Information Form, and Allergy Reaction Checklist).
 3. Make available, in school buildings, stock epinephrine for students with an unknown anaphylaxis reaction.
 4. Educate the parent/student on the proper procedure for emergency care. Any time emergency medication relating to an allergic reaction/anaphylaxis is administered, 911 must be called and the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be notified.
 5. Work cooperatively with the parent(s)/guardian(s) of students and school staff, as appropriate, regarding an individualized plan for the student.
 6. Develop a plan in the event a student does not have his/her emergency medication with him/her.
 7. Develop a plan for staff regarding how to assist students with allergies in the event of a school emergency (such as a natural disaster).
 8. Share student health information, prepared by the school nurse, with the principal, teacher/substitute, site manager and other staff as deemed necessary to provide information regarding the student's individualized health plan. Update staff as appropriate.
 9. Copy and forward the Medical Form for Students with Special Dietary Needs when received from parent(s)/guardian(s) to the office of Food and Nutrition Services.
 10. Verify monthly that students with allergies or special diets matches the report submitted by the office of Food and Nutrition Services.

11. Facilitate the transfer of emergency medications between home and school via the bus driver as provided in the student's individualized plan, as appropriate.

C. School-Based Administration Responsibilities:

1. Confirm that all staff that interact with students with food allergies are aware of the food allergen(s), can recognize the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction/anaphylaxis, and are trained to help the student in the event of anaphylaxis.
2. Confirm that all foods allowed in the school have an appropriate food label or that a list of all ingredients is provided. (See attached prototype).
3. Confirm all teachers are aware of student health information on the appropriate students and inform them that they may consult with school health staff as needed.
4. Facilitate classroom education if requested by a parent/guardian.
5. Coordinate additional services that may arise from an Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan that extend beyond these guidelines.
6. Avoid use of food products as a display in hallways.
7. Encourage the use of non-food items as part of classroom activities and incentives.
8. Designate a tree nut- and peanut-free table. Allergy-free students are encouraged to sit at this table with their counterparts assuming that their meal is allergen free.
9. Avoid placing waste receptacles near the designated tree nut- and peanut-free table.
10. Develop a letter for parents of students in the classroom stating the allergy a student in the classroom has and include an explanation of which food(s) is prohibited from the classroom. The name of the student with the allergy must not be mentioned.

D. Teacher Responsibilities

1. Plan lessons or use materials or incentives that are appropriate for students with allergies. This may require having an equal but alternative option for incentives.
2. Encourage the use of non-food items as part of classroom activities and incentives.
3. Notify parents of classroom celebrations that will involve food.
4. Encourage students to wash hands with soap and water before and after eating.
5. Confirm that desks/tables/countertops are cleaned where food was present.
6. Confirm student health information is made available to a substitute in your absence.
7. Avoid eating in the classroom, with the exception of school meal programs or if medically necessary.

8. Engage with parents relating to the student's allergic condition, dietary needs, and the scope of field trips in order to ensure that the proper foods are available for the student and there is limited contact with food allergens.

E. Maintenance and Operations Responsibilities:

Develop a cleaning plan that is acceptable for students with allergies. This includes classrooms and common areas such as hallways and cafeterias.

F. Transportation Administrator Responsibilities:

1. Alert bus drivers to which students have allergies.
2. Confirm that the methods of emergency communication with bus drivers are in proper working order.
3. Verify that bus drivers are trained to recognize the signs and symptoms of an allergic reaction/anaphylaxis and know what to do in the event of an emergency.
4. Confirm if emergency medications are being self-carried and the expiration date.
5. Confirm that the only foods permitted on a bus are those that are medically necessary for students and do not contain food allergens.
6. Consider assigned seating where appropriate.
7. Facilitate the transport of emergency medication between home and school as identified in a student's individualized plan.

V. Special Considerations

A. Emergency Preparation

In the event of a school emergency:

1. Food and Nutrition Services must verify that there are foods available for students with food allergies.
2. Administration and the student's teacher must ensure that the student has a safe environment that is free of food allergens.
3. School health staff will maintain the appropriate dose(s) of stock epinephrine in school buildings.

B. Harassment

Harassment related to food allergies and dietary modifications will not be tolerated. All staff must work cooperatively to determine if bullying is occurring. In order to reduce the risk of bullying, administration should consider:

1. Offering professional development for staff regarding confidentiality and the need to prevent public discussions regarding the health of specific students.
2. Discouraging labeling food-allergic students in front of others.
3. Providing set guidelines for disciplinary action for children found to be bullying other students.

In the event you have questions about these guidelines or require additional information, you may contact the following individuals:

Supervisor of Food and Nutrition Services
301-766-2893

School Health Programs Coordinator
301-766-8723

In the event you have questions about 504 Plans or require additional information about 504 Plans, you may contact the Supervisor of School Counseling at 301-766-2966.

In the event you have concerns about bullying, harassment, or intimidation or require additional information, you may contact the school principal.

Forms:

- Medical Form for Students with Special Dietary Needs – To be completed by parent/guardian and physician where applicable and returned to the school health nurse
- Physician’s Medication Order Form – To be completed by student’s physician and returned to the school health nurse
- Allergic Reaction Checklist – To be completed by parent/guardian and returned to the school health nurse

Resource Materials:

- “A Checklist for Parents With Children of Severe Allergies”
- “School Guidelines for Managing Students with Food Allergies” (Source: Food and Allergy Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN))
- “Tips for Avoiding Your Allergen” (Source: FAAN)
- Washington County Board of Education Policy JHCF – “Epinephrine Availability and Use Requirements”
- Maryland Annotated Code, Education Article Section 7-426.1 – “Children with Anaphylactic Allergies”
- Maryland Annotated Code, Education Article Section 7-426.2 – “Policy on Use of Epinephrine in Public Schools”
- Washington County Board of Education Policy ADF – “Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health”
- Washington County Public Schools Administrative Regulation ADF-R – “Wellness: Physical and Nutritional Health”
- Washington County Public Schools Exhibit ADF-E(1) – “Healthy Celebrations”
- Washington County Public Schools Exhibit ADF-E(2) – “Healthy Fundraising”
- Washington County Board of Education Policy JFH – “Policy Prohibiting Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation”
- Washington County Public Schools Administrative Regulation JFH-R – “Administrative Regulation Prohibiting Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation”

Approved:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Boyd J. Michael, III", written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Boyd J. Michael, III
Superintendent of Schools

Date: August 13, 2019