SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)

POLICY

No. F-8

Revised: June 25, 2008
Revised: February 22, 2012 (Regs)
Reviewed: October 24, 2018
Reviewed: October 25, 2023

ANAPHYLAXIS

Preamble:

Anaphylaxis is a sudden and severe allergic reaction, which can be fatal. It requires that immediate medical emergency measures be taken.

The Board of Education of School District No. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen) recognizes that there is a duty to provide care to students who are at risk from life-threatening allergic reactions while under school supervision. The Board also recognizes that this responsibility is shared among the student, parents, the school system and health care providers.

The purpose of this policy is to minimize the risk to students with severe allergies to potentially life-threatening allergens without depriving the severely allergic student of normal peer interactions or placing unreasonable restrictions on the activities of other students in the school.

This policy is designed to ensure that students at risk are identified, strategies are in place to minimize the potential for accidental exposure, and staff and key volunteers are trained to respond in an emergency situation.

Policy:

While the Okanagan Similkameen Board of Education cannot guarantee an allergen-free environment, the Board will take reasonable steps to provide an allergy-safe and allergy-aware environment for students with life-threatening allergies.

All schools in School District No. 53 must implement the steps outlined in Board Procedures on anaphylaxis, which include:

a) a process for identifying anaphylactic students;

b) a process for keeping a record with information relating to the specific allergies for each identified anaphylactic student to form part of the student's Permanent Student Record;

c) a process for establishing an emergency procedure plan, to be reviewed annually, for each identified anaphylactic student to form part of the student's Student Record;

d) education plan for anaphylactic students and their parents to encourage the use by any anaphylactic students of Medic-Alert identification;

e) procedures for storage and administering medications, including procedures for obtaining preauthorization[1] for employees to administer medication to an anaphylactic student[2]; and

f) a process for principals to monitor and report information about anaphylactic incidents to the Board in aggregate form.

[1] Must be obtained from both the student's physician and the student's parents

[2] For students who have not been identified as anaphylactic, the standard emergency procedure is to call emergency medical care (911 where available) - school staff should not administer medication to unidentified student

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PROCEDURES

1. Description of Anaphylaxis

Signs and symptoms of a severe allergic reaction can occur within minutes of exposure to an offending substance. Reactions usually occur within two hours of exposure, but in rarer cases can develop hours later. Specific warning signs as well as the severity and intensity of symptoms can vary from person to person and sometimes from reaction to reaction in the same person.

While the exact prevalence is unknown, it has been estimated that more than 600,000 or 1% to 2% of Canadians are at risk of anaphylaxis (from food and insect allergy), and that up to 6% of young children less than three years of age are at risk[3]. In the school age population, it is estimated that between 2-4% of children are at risk of anaphylactic reactions to foods.

An anaphylactic reaction can involve **any** of the following symptoms, which may appear alone or in any combination, regardless of the triggering allergen:

- **Skin:** hives, swelling, itching, warmth, redness, rash
- **Respiratory (breathing):** wheezing, shortness of breath, throat tightness, cough, hoarse voice, chest pain/tightness, nasal congestion or hay fever-like symptoms (runny itchy nose and watery eyes, sneezing) trouble swallowing
- **Gastrointestinal (stomach):** nausea, pain/cramps, vomiting, diarrhea
- **Cardiovascular (heart):** pale/blue color, weak pulse, passing out, dizzy/light-headed, shock
- **Other:** anxiety, feeling of "impending doom", headache, uterine cramps in females

[3] Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology. Anaphylaxis in Schools and Other Settings. 2005.

Because of the unpredictability of reactions, early symptoms should never be ignored[4], especially if the person has suffered an anaphylactic reaction in the past.

It is important to note that anaphylaxis can occur without hives.

If an allergic student expresses any concern that a reaction might be starting, the student should always be taken seriously. When a reaction begins, it is important to respond immediately, following instructions in the student's *Student Emergency Procedure Plan.* The cause of the reaction can be investigated later.

The following symptoms may lead to death:

- breathing difficulties caused by swelling of the airways; and/or
- a drop in blood pressure indicated by dizziness, light-headedness or feeling faint/weak.

2. Identifying Individuals at Risk (See Appendix A – Anaphylactic Flow Chart)

At the time of registration, using the District registration form, parents are asked to report on their child's medical conditions, including whether their child has a medical diagnosis of anaphylaxis. Information on a student's life-threatening conditions will be recorded and updated on the student's Permanent Student Record annually.

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to:

- Inform the school principal when their child is diagnosed as being at risk for anaphylaxis
- In a timely manner, complete medical forms Request for Administration of Medication at School Form (Appendix B) and the Student's Emergency Procedure Plan (Appendix C) which includes a current photograph, description of the child's allergy, emergency procedures, contact information, and consent to administer medication. The Student Emergency Procedure Plan should be posted in key areas such as in the child's classroom, the office, the teacher's daybook, and food consumption areas (e.g. lunch rooms, cafeterias). Parental permission is required to post or distribute the plan.[5]
- Provide the school with updated medical information at the beginning of each school year and whenever there is a significant change related to their child.
- Inform service providers of programs delivered on school property by non-school personnel of their child's anaphylaxis and care plan, as these programs are not the responsibility of the school.

The school will contact anaphylactic students and their parents to encourage the use of medical identifying information (e.g. MedicAlert®bracelet). The identifying information could alert others to the student's allergies and indicate that the student carries an epinephrine auto-injector. Information accessed through a special number on the identifying information can also assist first responders, such as paramedics, to access important information quickly.

[4] Training strategies need to address the need for a rapid emergency response when symptoms of an anaphylactic reaction appear. Students may be in denial, or unaware, that they are experiencing an anaphylactic reaction.

[5] A section for parental consent is included on the Student Emergency Procedure Plan.

3. Recordkeeping - Monitoring and Reporting

For each identified student, the school principal will keep a Student Emergency Procedure Plan (Appendix C) on file. These plans contain the following information:

- student information
- diagnosis/condition
- location of medication
- plan while in the care of the school
- symptoms to watch for
- precautions in the classroom
- standard response for anaphylaxis

It is the school principal's responsibility to collect and manage the information on students' life-threatening health conditions and to review that information annually as part of the students' Permanent Student Records.

The school principal will also monitor and report (Appendix D) information about anaphylactic incidents to the Board of Education in aggregate form (to include number of at-risk anaphylactic students and number of anaphylactic incidents) at a frequency and in a form as directed by the superintendent.

4. Emergency Procedure Plans

a) Student Level Emergency Procedure Plan

The school principal must ensure that the parents and student (where appropriate), are provided with an opportunity to meet with designated staff, prior to the beginning of each school year or as soon as possible to develop/update an individual Student Emergency Procedure Plan (Appendix C). The Student Emergency Procedure Plan must be signed by the student's parents and the student's physician. A copy of the plan will be placed in readily accessible, designated areas such as the classroom and office.

The Student Emergency Procedure Plan will include at minimum:

- the diagnosis;
- the current treatment regimen;
- who within the school community is to be informed about the plan - e.g. teachers, volunteers, classmate;
- current emergency contact information for the student's parents/guardian;
- a requirement for those exposed to the plan to maintain the confidentiality of the student's personal health information[6];
- information regarding the parent's responsibility for advising the school about any change/s in the student's condition; and
- information regarding the school's responsibility for updating records.

b) School Level Emergency Procedure Plan

Each school must develop a School Level Emergency Procedure Plan, which must include the following elements:

[6] To be in compliance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA);

1. Administer the student's auto-injector (single dose, single-use) at the first sign of a reaction. The use of epinephrine for a potentially life-threatening allergic reaction will not harm a normally healthy child, if epinephrine was not required. Note time of administration.
2. Call emergency medical care (911-where available).
3. Contact the child's parent/guardian.
4. A second auto-injector may be administered within 10 to 15 minutes or sooner, after the first dose is given IF symptoms have not improved (i.e. the reaction is continuing, getting worse, or has recurred).
5. If an auto-injector has been administered, the student must be transported to a hospital (the effects of the auto-injector may not last, and the student may have another anaphylactic reaction).
6. One person stays with the child at all times.
7. One person goes for help or calls for help.

The school principal, or designated staff, must ensure that emergency plan measures are in place for scenarios where students are off-site (e.g. bringing additional single dose, single-use auto-injectors on field trip).

5. Provision and Storage of Medication

Children at risk of anaphylaxis who have demonstrated maturity[7] should carry one auto-injector with them at all times and have a back-up auto-injector stored at the school in a central, easily accessible, unlocked location. For children who have not demonstrated maturity, their auto-injector(s) will be stored in a designated school location(s).

The location(s) of student auto-injectors must be known to all staff members and caregivers.

Parents will be informed that it is the parent's responsibility:

- to provide the appropriate medication (e.g. single dose, single-use epinephrine auto-injectors) for their anaphylactic child;
- to inform the school where the anaphylactic child's medication will be kept (i.e. with the student, in the student's classroom, and/or other locations);
- to inform the school when they deem the child competent to carry their own medication/s (children who have demonstrated maturity, usually Grade 1 or Grade 2, should carry their own auto-injector), and it is their duty to ensure their child understands they must carry their medication on their person at all times;
- to provide a second auto-injector to be stored in a central, accessible, safe but unlocked location;
- to ensure anaphylaxis medications have not expired; and
- to ensure that they replace expired medications.

[7] As determined by the child's parents.

6. Allergy Awareness, Prevention and Avoidance Strategies

a) Awareness

The school principal should ensure:

- that all school staff and persons reasonably expected to have supervisory responsibility of school-age students and preschool age children participating in early learning programs (e.g. food service staff, volunteers, bus drivers, custodians) receive training annually or bi-annually, in the recognition of a severe allergic reaction and the use of single dose, single-use auto-injectors and standard procedure plans;
- that all members of the school community including substitute employees, employees on call, student teachers, and volunteers have appropriate information about severe allergies including background information on allergies, anaphylaxis, and safety procedures; and
- with the consent of the parent, the principal and the classroom teacher must ensure that the student's classmates are provided with information on severe allergies in a manner that is appropriate for the age and maturity level of the students, and that strategies to reduce teasing and bullying are incorporated into this information.

Posters which describe signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis and how to administer a single dose, single-use auto-injector should be placed in relevant areas. These areas may include classrooms, office, staffroom, lunch room and/or the cafeteria.

b) Avoidance/Prevention

Individuals at risk of anaphylaxis must learn to avoid specific triggers. While the key responsibility lies with the students at risk and their families, the school community must participate in creating an "allergy-aware" environment. Special care is taken to avoid exposure to allergy-causing substances. Parents are asked to consult with the teacher before sending in food to classrooms where there are food-allergic children. The risk of accidental exposure to a food allergen can be significantly diminished by means of such measures.

Given that anaphylaxis can be triggered by minute amounts of an allergen when ingested, students with food allergies must be encouraged to follow certain guidelines.

- Eat only food which they have brought from home unless it is packaged, clearly labeled and approved by their parents (*Elementary Schools)*.
- If eating in a cafeteria, ensure food service staff understands the life-threatening nature of their allergy. When in doubt, avoid the food item in question.
- Wash hands before and after eating.
- Do not share food, utensils or containers.
- Place food on a napkin or wax paper rather than in direct contact with a desk or table.

Non-food allergens (e.g. medications, latex) will be identified and restricted from classrooms and common areas where a child with a related allergy may encounter that substance.

7. Training Strategy

At the beginning of each school year, a training session on anaphylaxis and anaphylactic shock will be held for all school staff and persons reasonably expected to have supervisory responsibility of school-age students and preschool age children participating in early learning programs (e.g. food service staff, volunteers, bus drivers, custodians).

Efforts shall be made to include the parents, and students (where appropriate), in the training. Experts (e.g. public health nurses, trained occupational health & safety staff) will be consulted in the development of training policies and the implementation of training. Training will be provided by individuals trained to teach anaphylaxis management.

The training sessions will include:

- signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis;
- common allergens;
- avoidance strategies;
- emergency protocols;
- use of single dose, single-use epinephrine auto-injectors;
- identification of at-risk students (as outlined in the individual Student Emergency Procedure Plan);
- emergency plans; and
- method of communication with and strategies to educate and raise awareness of parents, students, employees and volunteers about anaphylaxis.

Additional Best Practice:

- distinction between the needs of younger and older anaphylactic students.

Participants will have an opportunity to practice using an auto-injector trainer (i.e. device used for training purposes) and are encouraged to practice with the auto-injector trainers throughout the year, especially if they have a student at risk in their care.

Students will learn about anaphylaxis in a general assembly or special class presentations.