

## APPENDIX 10

# Communication strategies for school communities

It is important to work with the whole school community to better understand how to provide a safe and supportive environment for all students, including students with severe allergies.

Principals or their delegated executive staff should develop communication strategies in order to provide information about severe allergies and the school's procedures to staff, students and parents.

### Raising staff awareness

All staff involved in the care of students at risk of anaphylaxis, including class teachers, casual relief teachers, canteen and administrative staff should know:

- the causes, symptoms and treatment of anaphylaxis
- the identities of students who are known to be at risk of anaphylaxis
- the risk minimisation strategies in place
- where adrenaline autoinjectors are kept
- the school's first aid and emergency response procedures
- their role in responding to an allergic reaction.

Some ways to achieve this include allocating time, such as at staff meetings, to discuss, practise and review the school's management strategies for students diagnosed at risk of anaphylaxis, and providing and/or displaying copies of the student's ASCIA Action Plan for Anaphylaxis in canteens, the front office and staff rooms.

It is particularly important that there are procedures in place for informing casual relief teachers of students at risk of anaphylaxis and the steps required for prevention and emergency response. A designated staff member should have responsibility for briefing new staff (including canteen staff, volunteers or casual relief staff) about students at risk of anaphylaxis, the school's procedures and strategies for minimising risk.

### Raising student awareness

Having supportive friends and class mates are important for students at risk of anaphylaxis. Staff can raise awareness of anaphylaxis in school through class activities, teaching activities and use of fact sheets or posters displayed in hallways, canteens and classrooms.

Key messages include:

- always take allergies seriously – severe allergies are no joke
- don't share your food with friends who have food allergies
- wash your hands after eating or touching food
- know what your friends are allergic to
- if a friend/student becomes sick or unwell, get help from an adult immediately
- be respectful of a student's adrenaline autoinjector
- don't pressure your friends to eat food that they are allergic to.

It is important to be aware that some students at risk of anaphylaxis may not want to be singled out or seen to be treated differently, but this must not compromise their safety.

At any age, students may be unable to communicate with their peers that they have come into contact with an allergen, particularly if they become too distressed or incapacitated. It is important to reinforce the message that if a student sees a peer who is unwell or distressed always notify a teacher.

Also be aware that bullying of students at risk of anaphylaxis can occur in the form of teasing, tricking a student into eating a particular food or threatening a student with the substance that they are allergic to. Talk to the students involved so they are aware of the seriousness of an anaphylactic reaction. Any attempt to harm a student at risk of anaphylaxis must be treated seriously and dealt with accordingly. Government schools can refer to the [Student Discipline in Government Schools Policy](#) and the [Bullying: Preventing and Responding to Student Bullying in Schools Policy](#).

## Working with parents/carers of students at risk of anaphylaxis

Schools should be aware that the parents of a child who is at risk of anaphylaxis may experience high levels of anxiety about sending their child to school. It is important to encourage an open and cooperative relationship with parents so that they can feel confident that appropriate management strategies are in place.

Aside from implementing practical strategies to minimize risk in schools, the anxiety that parents, students and staff may feel can be considerably reduced by increased education, awareness and support from the school community.

## Engaging the broader school community

Schools can raise awareness about anaphylaxis in the school community so that parents of all students have an increased understanding of the condition.

See Appendix 5 for advice on where to access further information on anaphylaxis including posters, fact sheets and brochures for use to promote greater awareness of severe allergies in the school community.

## Privacy considerations

Privacy legislation places limitations on the collection, use and disclosure of personal and health information. It may be necessary to provide medical and other information to staff in order to implement an individual health care plan. Depending on the circumstances it may sometimes be necessary to convey such information to other parents and students. Using or disclosing information for this purpose will not breach privacy legislation.

Where it is necessary to provide information to staff, other parents or students the parent and where applicable the student should be informed of this beforehand. Principals or their delegated executive staff should ensure that the persons who are provided with this information are aware of the need to deal with such as information sensitively and confidentially.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Information in this Appendix was informed by information used in the Anaphylaxis Guidelines: A resource for managing severe allergies in Victorian government schools. Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. Victoria and the 'Be a Mate' resource developed by [Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia](#).