

Guidelines *for* Food Service Personnel *in* Schools



With the increased number of students with food allergies now enrolled in schools – and 30 percent of food-allergic children allergic to multiple foods – increased education and resources for food service personnel are essential.

Mealtimes during school hours can be stressful for food-allergic students, their parents, school staff, and food service personnel. The information provided here should be used to help create or strengthen food allergy management guidelines within food services in schools.

Accidents do happen, and all school staff – including food service personnel – should be educated on emergency procedures should an allergic reaction occur. Food service personnel should attend all meetings prior to the beginning of the school year, and throughout the year as needed, regarding the needs of students with food allergies. This allows food service personnel the opportunity to learn about each student’s emergency action plan in addition to:

- Learning what foods each student must avoid.
- Learning best practices for the school year.
- Being able to ask questions about feeding the student.
- Being able to review the student’s [Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Plans](#).
- Receiving training on [how to use](#) prescribed auto-injector epinephrine devices.
- Learning about [504 accommodations](#) or other plans in place for the students.
- Learning about student placement in the cafeteria and student safety and inclusion.

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Best Practices *for* Food Service Supervisors *and* Personnel

- Follow the guidance and utilize resources available from your local food service director, local board of health, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), or registered dietitians trained in managing food allergies.
- Collaborate with your local food service director, the school staff and nurse, parents, and students' physicians to share pertinent information about each student with food allergies prior to the start of each school year.
- Identify students with food allergies and become familiar with his or her allergy and anaphylaxis emergency care plan. School staff should keep the emergency care plan in a location that is easily accessible by food service personnel.
- Ask parents to provide you with a signed medical statement from the student's physician outlining the management of the student's allergens and avoidance measures.
- Know where each student's emergency medications are stored (if they are not self-carried) and be trained in the administration of each student's prescribed epinephrine auto-injector and any other necessary medications.
- Have a policy in place regarding label reading and keep a list of ingredients and product updates in appropriate and convenient areas, updating as necessary.
- Use separate utensils, pots, pans, cutting boards, etc., when preparing foods for food-allergic students. Learn how to effectively clean and store these items.
- Follow policies and guidelines to prevent allergic reactions and cross-contact from occurring.
- Learn about proper [cleaning and removing allergens](#) from surfaces and hands.
- Ensure food service staff clean all tables and chairs for use by students with food allergies.
- Attend all training and informational meetings on each student with a food allergy.
- Provide training to all cafeteria personnel on how to accommodate students with food allergies during mealtimes and when snacks are provided, including special events.
- Provide food service staff with resources to help assist in the management of students with food allergies.
 - [Accommodating Children with Special Dietary Needs](#)
- Implement and review cross-contact procedures. Visit [FAACT's Cross-Contact page](#) for more information.
- Meet with parents upon request to review cafeteria menu items and ingredients and cafeteria procedures. This is especially important for students who are transitioning from half-day kindergarten to a full-day first grade or re-entry after an anaphylactic reaction at school.
- Display an ingredient label for each food on the cafeteria buffet line. This provides students the ability to self-educate as well as self-advocate.

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Prepare to Act



It is important that food service personnel prepare for and understand how to respond to a food allergic emergency. Steps to take include:

- [Annual food allergy and anaphylaxis training](#) for all food service personnel.
- Learn the [signs and symptoms](#) of an allergic reaction.
- Learn [how to use](#) the student's epinephrine auto-injector device and other medications.
- Advocate for emergency drills.
- Learn the procedure for activating EMS in an emergency.
- In the event of an emergency, follow the instructions provided by the physician on the student's emergency action care plan.
- Additional concerns school staff need to prepare for in an emergency include:
 - Who will give epinephrine? (Note the time the device was used – and write it on the device, if possible – for first responders).
 - Who will call 9-1-1 and by what method?
 - Who will retrieve the second epinephrine auto-injector and where will it be stored?
 - Who will be outside the school to flag down first responders? (This is especially important in the private school setting or for schools located on large campuses.)
 - Who will ride with the student to the hospital?
 - Who will contact the parents?
 - Where will the emergency numbers for the parents be located?
 - Who will comfort remaining students and notify their parents (if needed)?

Food Service School personnel should carefully review the contents of this website and utilize the free downloads and resources available.

For more information on food allergies in the school setting and to access FAACT's posters, visit [FAACT's Food Services Section](#).

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