

MANAGING ASTHMA IN NEW MEXICO SCHOOLS

XII. THE FOOD SERVICE STAFF

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Food Service Staff Responsibilities

Important Points

Maintaining clean food preparation, serving, and eating areas is essential.

Any air quality or maintenance issues should be reported immediately.

Food service staff should be able to identify the signs of a severe allergic reaction and respond appropriately.

The school nurse is a resource to learn more about asthma and its management, especially the school's asthma emergency plan.

Food service staff should maintain a clean area for all food preparation and serving. If maintenance issues are identified they should be reported as soon as possible. Cleanliness is essential to prevent unwanted pests and odors that can contribute to allergy problems.

While food service staff members are busy providing good nutrition for all students, they need to be aware of the potential link between food allergies and asthma. According to the Food Allergy Network, students with both asthma and food allergies are at increase risk for severe allergic reactions. The school nurse can alert food service staff to students with the potential for food allergies.

In addition to knowing how to help a student who is experiencing an asthma episode, food service staff should be prepared to recognize allergy symptoms indicating anaphylaxis and act quickly. Such reactions are potentially life threatening.

To help insure safety, some school cafeterias have chosen to have a designated eating area for students with significant food allergies. Seating in this area should be completely voluntary.

Common Food Allergies

Research suggests that children with asthma are at a greater risk for severe allergic reactions to foods. The eight foods that account for 90% of allergic reactions are:

- peanuts
- eggs
- fish
- milk
- wheat
- soy
- tree nuts (walnuts and pecans)
- shellfish.

Every member of the school staff needs to be aware of students' food allergies and food service staff has a special responsibility to be vigilant. Food allergies can occur anywhere, but the school cafeteria is a high-risk area. Additionally, food handlers should use vinyl gloves to avoid any problems with potential latex allergies.

Recognizing the signs and symptoms of severe allergic reactions is essential. These include:

- itching and swelling of the lips, tongue, or lining of the mouth
- itching and/or a sense of tightness in the throat
- shortness of breath and wheezing
- hoarseness and a hacking cough
- hives or an itchy rash
- facial swelling or swelling in the limbs (arms and legs)
- nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or stomach cramps
- rapid pulse and/or fainting
- anxiety and restlessness.

These symptoms can appear suddenly, advance rapidly, and become life threatening. Immediate action is required. Ask the student who is experiencing these symptoms if he/she is carrying medications to treat allergic symptoms. **The school nurse should be called to administer emergency treatment and assist in determining if calling 911 is warranted.** Any allergic reactions should be reported to the involved student's parents.

An awareness of foods most likely to cause severe reactions is important.

The school nurse is a resource to learn more about asthma and its management, especially the school's asthma emergency plan.

Reducing Asthma Triggers

Maintaining clean food preparation, serving, and eating areas is essential.

Any air quality or maintenance issues should be reported immediately.

In addition to managing food allergy concerns, food service staff members have an important role in reducing other potential asthma triggers. Important steps in reducing these triggers in the food service area include:

- careful food storage - sealed, locking containers are ideal
- wiping counters and table tops with soap and water
- cleaning all food preparation and cooking areas very well
- sweeping and wet mopping floors
- disposing of food and any waste carefully to eliminate cockroaches and other pests
- being alert to any moisture problems
- avoiding cleaners with heavy odors or perfumes

These steps should be followed on a daily basis to ensure that food preparation areas, serving areas, and eating areas remain clean and to discourage unwanted pests. Frequent inspections should be conducted and policies and procedures need to be evaluated regularly to ensure an asthma- friendly school environment.

Food Service Checklist



Name: _____

School: _____

Room or Area: _____ Date Completed: _____

Signature: _____

Instructions

1. Read the *IAQ Backgrounder* and the Background Information for this checklist.
2. Keep the Background Information and make a copy of the checklist for future reference.
3. Complete the Checklist.
 - Check the “yes,” “no,” or “not applicable” box beside each item. (A “no” response requires further attention.)
 - Make comments in the “Notes” section as necessary.
4. Return the checklist portion of this document to the IAQ Coordinator.

1. COOKING AREA

- | | Yes | No | N/A |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1a. Determined that local exhaust fans operate properly (note if fans are excessively noisy)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1b. Checked for odors near cooking, preparation, and eating areas..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1c. Ensured that exhaust fans are used whenever cooking, washing dishes, and cleaning..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1d. Determined that gas appliances function properly..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1e. Verified that gas appliances are vented outdoors..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1f. Ensured there are no combustion gas or natural gas odors, leaks, back-drafting, or headaches when gas appliances are used | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1g. Ensured that kitchen is clean after use..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1h. Determined there are no signs of microbiological growth in the kitchen, including the upper walls and ceiling (for example, mold, slime, and algae)..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1i. Selected biocides registered by EPA (if required), followed the manufacturer’s directions for use, and carefully reviewed the method of application..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1j. Verified the kitchen is free of plumbing and ceiling leaks (signs include stains, discoloration, and damp areas) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. FOOD HANDLING AND STORAGE

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 2a. Checked food preparation, cooking, and storage areas for signs of insects and vermin (for example, feces or remains) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2b. Stored leftovers in well-sealed containers with no traces of food on outside surfaces | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2c. Ensured that food preparation, cooking, and storage practices are sanitary | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2d. Disposed of food scraps properly and removed crumbs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2e. Wiped counters clean with soap and water or a disinfectant (according to school policy) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2f. Swept and wet mopped floors..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. WASTE MANAGEMENT

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 3a. Selected and placed waste in appropriate containers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3b. Ensured that containers’ lids are securely closed..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3c. Separated food waste and food-contaminated items from other wastes, if possible .. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3d. Stored waste containers in a well-ventilated area | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3e. Ensured that dumpsters are properly located (away from air intake vents, operable windows, and food service doors) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

DELIVERIES

- | | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 4a. Instructed vendors to avoid idling their engines during deliveries..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4b. Posted a sign prohibiting vehicles from idling their engines in receiving areas | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4c. Ensured that doors or air barriers are closed between receiving area and kitchen..... | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



NOTES

Emergency Care Algorithm

ASTHMA/WHEEZING OR DIFFICULTY BREATHING

