

# Syosset Central School District

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Many of our students have food allergies that have the potential for a wide-range of reactions from mild (gastro-intestinal discomfort; itchy eyes, nose, and skin) to severe and life-threatening (respiratory and cardiac). The level of sensitivity to allergens varies as well from ingestion of a food item to merely smelling it.

Foods that most commonly cause allergy symptoms in children are peanuts, tree nuts, dairy, eggs, soy, fish, shellfish, wheat, and sesame.

The Syosset Central School District has a strong commitment to keeping students safe and healthy. The District adopted new policies and procedures with the goal of minimizing the potential for accidental exposure and maximizing our ability to respond effectively should such an exposure occur. Keeping all our students safe is a shared responsibility, one that will benefit from the cooperation of everyone in the community, whether their own child has an allergy or not.

The District has trained its personnel both on food allergies themselves, but also on how to respond in the event of an emergency. Emergency response devices (epinephrine auto-injectors a.k.a. “Epi-Pens”) are available in multiple locations in every building. Teachers will discuss with students, in an age appropriate manner, the seriousness of life-threatening allergies and the importance of not sharing or trading snack or party food with classmates.

We recognize that we cannot completely eliminate the potential for accidental exposure, and attempting to do so would create a false sense of security. Nevertheless, we can take steps that minimize the potential for accidental exposure, and we must do so in a way that protects the privacy of each child’s health status. The consistent application of the following guidelines across all the elementary schools will best ensure that both of these objectives are met, no matter where in the District a child might live.

Some important highlights are as follows:

- Food should not be used as an instructional incentive or reward.
- Schools may still host food-based celebrations for student birthdays. However, the food-based celebrations should occur no more than once per month, with other means employed to make students feel special on their actual birthday. During the food-based celebration, the school will establish food choices in advance that include at least one food safe for any student in the class.

- No other food will be permitted in the building.
- At least one table in each cafeteria will be established for students bringing peanut or tree nut-based lunches (peanut butter, almond butter, granola, etc.). Thus, every effort will be made to isolate these sometimes airborne allergens, and special cleaning procedures will be used for that table. While this will reduce exposure elsewhere, such efforts cannot ensure that all other tables are free of allergens.
- Each teacher who has a student with a life threatening allergy enrolled in his/her class will keep this information in his/her emergency folder.
- At the secondary schools, each classroom will include chair(s) identified as reduced allergen chairs. Students consuming food with known allergens will be asked to avoid the chairs, and special cleaning procedures will be used on them.

It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to report a child's life-threatening allergy to their child's school nurse or administrator in order for the School District to accommodate the student within the school environment. Thus, parents are urged to read and become familiar with the newly revised Student Health Services Policy.

Below are some key elements of the section on life-threatening allergies and anaphylaxis management:

- Parent/guardians should teach their allergic child to recognize first symptoms, to communicate these to staff, to not share snacks, lunches, drinks, and utensils.
- Upon notification by the parent and/or guardian, a conference may be held to develop an Individual Health Plan (IHP), Emergency Care Plan, or a Section 504 accommodation plan if the student is eligible for an accommodation based on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- Students' life-threatening allergies should be included in the emergency green card for parents/guardians to complete and return to the school.
- A new pre-approved snack list is available on the School District's website and will be distributed to parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year and updated as necessary.

These procedures are constantly being evaluated to determine where improvements can be made and may well require more adjustments as we continue to make the school environment a safer place for all in our school community.

It is our hope that you and your family enjoy the remaining days of summer. We look forward to a safe and prosperous school year.

Sincerely,

Syosset Central School District