

Overbrook School for the Blind – Food Allergy Guideline Procedures

Overbrook School for the Blind is committed to providing a safe learning environment that supports students' physical, psychological, and social development. The **Food Allergy Guideline Procedures** helps prevent exposure to severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reactions through food allergens.

These guidelines were developed collaboratively by Health Services, Food Services, and Related Services staff, and reflect both state and federal regulations, including those from the Pennsylvania Department of Education, the Pennsylvania Department of Health, and state recommendations for Accommodating Students with Disabilities and Special Dietary Needs.

General Practices for Risk Reduction

- Health Services meets with classroom teachers and paraeducators at the start of the year, as needed, and when new students enroll to review students' medical needs and food allergy precautions.
- The Human Resources Department provides food allergy guideline information to all substitute teachers and contracted staff.
- When a student has a documented food allergy, proactive steps are taken to minimize exposure risk. These include:
 - Posting allergy alert signs in classrooms
 - Identifying allergy-free tables in the cafeteria
 - Disinfecting and sanitizing tables appropriately
- Health Services informs:
 - Related Services staff
 - Program Coordinators
 - Educational staff
 - Food Services Manager

- Registered Dietitian
of students with food allergies or intolerances.
- Early Childhood is a nut-safe zone.
- Classroom, specialty, and contracted staff receive:
 - Student-specific medical information
 - Emergency Action Plans
 - Accessibility tip sheets from supervisors and teachers, if applicable.

Food Brought from Home / Designated Areas

- Students may bring lunch from home.
- Allergen-safe zones are clearly designated and include:
 - Classrooms
 - Eating areas within classrooms
 - Allergy-free tables in the cafeteria
- Peanut/Nut Safe forms and Braille signage are posted in classrooms and cafeterias.

Annual Review and Communication

- Guidelines are reviewed and updated annually by a committee from Health Services, Food Services, and Related Services. Final review is done by the Superintendent and School Board.
- All staff receive updates during Back-to-School Professional Development.
- Parents and caregivers are informed at Parent's Day or during Parent Nutrition Programs.
- The Food Allergy Guidelines are available on the school website.

Classroom Risk Reduction

- Identified allergens are avoided in:
 - Projects
 - Arts and crafts
 - Science experiments
 - Life skills lessons and sensory experiences
 - Events and celebrations
- Staff will email the Registered Dietitian for help with allergy-friendly ingredients and recipes.

- Proper handwashing, using soap and water, is done before and after food consumption.
- No food sharing is allowed between staff and students.
- Secondary and Stride students receive education on food allergies as part of Wellness initiatives.
- Parents of children with food allergies can receive support in terms of food accommodations for their child.
- Non-food incentives are encouraged for:
 - Celebrations
 - Parties
 - Rewards
- Guidelines for parents are posted on the school website with the Food Allergy Guidelines.
- Students receive help with interpreting food labels, if needed.
- All instructional and contracted staff receive annual training on Food Allergy Procedures.
- Substitute teachers are also educated on the guidelines.
- Epinephrine Auto-Injectors (EpiPens or Auvi-Q) are readily accessible in case of emergency.
- Classroom staff are trained by Health Services on how to administer EpiPens.

Cafeteria Risk Reduction

- Allergen-safe food preparation areas are maintained.
- Utensils and containers are hand-washed with soap and water before entering dishwashers.
- Assigned spaces are used to prevent cross-contamination.
- Food Service Staff are trained annually on:
 - Recognizing food allergies
 - Preventing cross-contamination
 - Proper handwashing
- Proper handwashing, using soap and water, is done before and after food consumption.
- The cafeteria has designated **allergy-friendly** seating zones during meals.
- EpiPens are readily available in the event of an allergic reaction.
- Staff handling food or utensils from staff salad bars must handwash before returning to student food prep areas or the kitchen.

Field Trip Risk Reduction

- Field Trip locations are investigated by the Health Services Department to ensure they are safe for students with food allergies.

- If a student with a severe allergy that requires an Epinephrine Auto Injectors (EpiPen) goes off campus for a field trip:
 - staff must obtain their EpiPen from Health Service's nurses
 - EpiPen should be carried on trips
 - Then returned when back on campus.
- Each EpiPen includes a packet of information about how to administer it.
- **Responding to Food Allergies:** In the event of a food allergy emergency, there is rapid access to Epinephrine Auto Injectors (EpiPens).
- Educational employees are trained by school nurses on the signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis reaction and how to administer EpiPen at the beginning of year and as needed throughout the school year.
- Food for students is not ordered from restaurants unless allergy precautions have been evaluated.

Physical Education - Sporting Events Risk Reduction

All foods provided during sporting events are cleared by:

- Health Services
- Food Services
- Registered Dietitian

Special Events and Activities Risk Reduction

All school-provided special events are approved by:

- Health Services
- Food Services Manager
- Registered Dietitian

Fall Festival treats are approved and scheduled through:

- Health Services
- Educational Department
- Related Services

Staff Consumption Risk Reduction

- Staff may consume nut products or outside food only in designated areas that students do not routinely access.
- These areas **do not include classrooms**.
- Supervisors and coordinators must ensure a student-free space is available for staff celebrations or food-related events.
- Staff working in classroom areas must:
 - Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water after consuming outside food
 - Follow mouth-washing protocols if necessary

School Bus Companies and Risk Reduction for Food Allergies

To help ensure student safety, school bus companies and drivers should follow the guidelines below regarding food allergies:

- School Bus Companies and Risk Reduction School bus companies/drivers are advised to consult with parents to determine if their child has a food allergy.
- School bus companies/drivers are encouraged to avoid feeding students and or allowing students to eat or share food while they are being transported on the bus.
- School bus companies/drivers are advised to have an “Emergency Allergic Reaction Response Plan” for students who have food allergies.

These measures are essential for creating a safe transportation environment for all students.

Private Duty Nurses (PDNs) and Classroom Eating

Private Duty Nurses (PDNs) should be encouraged to eat outside of the classroom whenever possible. However, due to the nature of their responsibilities, this may not always be feasible.

When eating in the classroom, the following allergy safety procedures must be followed:

- PDNs must use a designated eating area away from students.
- Early Childhood classrooms are nut-safe zones — no nut-containing foods are permitted.
- Ensure proper handwashing, using soap and water, is done before and after food consumption.
- Follow mouth-washing protocol, if applicable.
- Food must not be shared between staff and students.

Staff Bringing Outside Food for Students

Overbrook staff should not bring in or share outside food with students. However, there are specific exceptions when this may be permitted:

- **Classroom cooking activities**
- **Curriculum-based nutrition education activities**

If students are participating in these approved activities, all classroom staff must follow the allergy safety procedures below:

- Notify the Registered Dietitian and Food Services Manager in advance by email. Include detailed plans so they can review for safety and confirm all student allergies are accounted for.
- Limit food consumption to the designated classroom where the activity is taking place.
- Ensure proper handwashing, using soap and water, is done before and after food consumption.
- Do not share food with other Overbrook students who are not part of the designated activity.
- Follow mouth-washing protocol, if applicable.

In the Event of a Food Allergy emergency

- If a student is showing signs and symptoms of a serious allergy emergency, or anaphylaxis,
 - a. Provide Epinephrine
 - b. Call 911 immediately
 - c. Notify Health Services ext. 261 or 309
 - d. Signs and symptoms include but are not limited to: hives, swelling, abdominal pain, throat tightness, difficulty breathing, wheezing, very sleepy/quiet etc.

Thank you for your cooperation in keeping all students safe.

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