

NSW Department of Education Student Health in NSW Public Schools: A summary and consolidation of policy

This policy provides a summary and consolidation of policy on student health in NSW public schools. It is designed to be read in conjunction with the department's student health website and the policy implementation documents.

1. Objectives - Policy statement

1.1 This policy requires schools to implement practices related to student health that comply with the NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act), Common Law obligations, and anti-discrimination and privacy legislation, and that demonstrate a commitment to collaboration with parents to support the wellbeing of students.

1.2 Schools assist students who have health support needs at school by means that include the provision of first aid (including emergency care), the provision of temporary care when students become unwell at school, the administration of prescribed medications and health care procedures, and the development of individual health care plans if required.

1.3 The health and safety of students is relevant to learning and is important to schools

1.4 The present and future health of students can be enhanced by quality learning and positive experiences at school

1.5 All children and young people of legal school age are entitled to participate in education and training regardless of their health support needs

1.6 Support for students on health issues must be provided in a way that does not discriminate unlawfully against any student

1.7 Students benefit if they are provided with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and understandings relevant to managing their own health. Taking into account what is reasonable and safe in an individual case, schools are expected to support students to develop independence in managing their own health

1.8 Schools rely on and value the cooperation of parents, medical practitioners, health services, other relevant agencies and local community resources to assist them to support the health of students

1.9 Schools must assist with the administration of prescribed medication or health care procedures during school hours where this support cannot reasonably be undertaken by parents or others outside school hours. The non-emergency administration of prescribed medication and health care procedures by staff is performed on a voluntary basis

1.10 The school's duty of care does not extend to administering medication and/or health care procedures to students who are able to administer this medication or carry out this procedure themselves. If, however, a student self-administers prescribed medication and/or health care procedures, the school has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that the self-administration is carried out safely.

1.11 First Aid

1.11.1 Schools are responsible for providing first aid at a local level and are required to implement department policy and procedures regarding first aid in schools. Related information can be found at First Aid (intranet only).

1.12 Care of students who become unwell at school

1.12.1 Students who become unwell at school are best transferred to the care of parent/carer. The aim of care given at school to such students is to make them comfortable in the interim

1.12.2 Each school needs to identify the staff members(s) who will care for students who are unwell and the procedures that are to be followed. This role can be carried out by staff members who have been asked by the principal to undertake these duties and who volunteer

1.12.3 The principal is responsible for negotiating an appropriate arrangement for temporary care of students who are unwell at school. Learning and engagement staff from the local educational services office are available to assist.

1.12.4 In the special case of residential schools, arrangements for short term care for minor ailments may be undertaken as part of the school's provision in the residential facility.

1.13 Administration of prescribed medications and health care procedures

1.13.1 The administration of prescribed medications and health care procedures in schools can be carried out by staff members who volunteer to undertake these duties and who are trained. An administration of prescribed medications allowance is paid to school administrative and support staff members to carry out this role. A health care procedures allowance is paid to school learning support officers to carry out this role. See also e-Administration of Prescribed Medications at School course and Health Care Procedures training (intranet).

1.13.2 Where no staff member is prepared to volunteer for the non-emergency administration of prescribed medication or health care procedures and community resources cannot assist, the school must seek the advice of relevant learning and engagement staff from their educational service. The learning and engagement staff will, in some cases, seek the advice of the Disability Learning and Support Office or Student Engagement and Interagency Partnerships Office. An enrolment cannot be refused solely on the ground that no staff member is willing to assist. See also Individual students who need help with health issues.

1.14 Individual health care plans

1.14.1 An individual health care plan must be developed for any student:

- diagnosed with severe asthma, type 1 diabetes, epilepsy or anaphylaxis and/or
- diagnosed as being at risk of an emergency and/or
- who requires the administration of health care procedures.

1.14.2 Principals have discretion about developing a written individual health care plan in other cases. Their decision will be guided by circumstances where the principal judges that a formal plan will assist in the schools management of the support for the student.

1.14.3 Relevant staff must be consulted in the development of individual health care plans and in any cases where their assistance in administration of prescribed medication and/or health care procedures may be called upon. It is particularly important that they are consulted regarding students diagnosed with a condition that might require an emergency response. See also Developing individual healthcare plans for students with more complex needs.

2. Audience and applicability

2.1 NSW Government schools, including preschools; parents/guardians/caregivers and the public.

3. Context

3.1 The NSW Department of Education and Communities is committed to meeting its obligations under the NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011 and the Common Law, to keep students safe while they are at

school. The department also seeks to provide opportunities for students to learn about and practise ways of adopting and maintaining a healthy, productive and active life through the student welfare policies and procedures of schools and through Personal Development, Health and Physical Education and other Key Learning Areas.

3.2 On specific issues related to student health and on public health priorities, the department is guided by advice from the NSW Ministry of Health. Local health networks, including Public Health Units provide information and advice on local health issues.

3.3 Principals as work place managers for WHS and injury management are accountable for safety within their school. Principals are required to recognise their obligations as work place managers, ensure they implement department policies and procedures relating to their school's safety, and use resources available to manage safety issues in their school. See also Work Health & Safety (intranet)

3.4 Legislation

3.4.1 Under the NSW Anti-Discrimination Act 1977 and the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 it is unlawful to discriminate against students in relation to enrolment, or once enrolled, on the grounds of their disability. The definition of disability is very wide in both Acts and would include students who must take prescribed medication and/or who need health care procedures administered either on an ongoing or emergency basis

3.4.2 Under the NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act) the department must do everything reasonably practicable to ensure that students are not exposed to risks to their health or safety while they are at school. Under the Common Law, the department and its staff have a duty to take reasonable care to keep students safe.

3.4.3 Under the NSW Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998 the department and its staff have certain obligations regarding the collection, use and storage of personal information. Principals may obtain further information from Legal Services Privacy (Intranet only).

3.4.4 The Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002 ("The Health Privacy Act") protects the health information of individuals in NSW.

4. Responsibilities and delegations

4.1 Principals

4.1.1 It is the responsibility of the principal to implement policy and procedures to ensure that systems are in place to protect the health and safety of all students when they are at school or involved in school activities.

4.1.2 Principals need to develop and document local procedures to support student health which reflect department policy and incorporate local needs, including:

- first aid (intranet)
- temporary care of students who become unwell at schools (see section 1.12)
- the administration of prescribed medications and health care procedures (see section 1.13 and related website information)
- individual health care plans (see section 1.14 and related website information)
- immunisation documentation requirements (see related website information)
- supply and storage of medication (see related website information)
- provision of emergency care (see related website information at staff training -and see Training and Policies Requiring Regular Review).

4.2 *All school staff*

4.2.1 It is the responsibility of school staff to:

- take reasonable measures to protect students against risk of injury or harm which should reasonably have been foreseen
- take reasonable care for the health and safety of all persons in the workplace and to cooperate with the employer to ensure that health and safety of all in the workplace, including assisting in an emergency
- where staff do not have first aid qualifications, provide assistance to ensure that a student receives medical attention including first aid.

4.3 *Particular staff members*

4.3.1 It is the responsibility of the person(s) who volunteers and is (are) trained in the administration of medications to administer prescribed medications in accordance with department policy and procedures

4.3.2 It is the responsibility of the person(s) who volunteers and is (are) trained to perform health care procedures to administer health care procedures in accordance with department policy and procedures

4.3.3 It is the responsibility of the person(s) who volunteers and is (are) trained in the administration of first aid to administer first aid in accordance with department policy and procedures.

4.4 *Expectations of parents/guardians/caregivers*

4.4.1 Parents are expected to:

- co-operate with the school on student health matters
- inform the school of the health needs of the child at enrolment or when health conditions develop or change
- liaise with the child's medical practitioner about the implications of any health condition for their schooling and convey advice and information from the medical practitioner to the school
- if required, provide prescribed medication and 'consumables' for administration by the school in a timely way and as agreed with the principal
- where relevant, collaborate with the school in planning to support the child's health needs at school including updating information and reviewing plans.

Relevant information on the role of parents can be found on the department's student health section of the public schools website.

4.5 *Expectations of students*

4.5.1 Students are expected to:

- contribute to the provision of a healthy and safe school environment
- ensure that medication is taken for the purpose for which it is intended by the person for whom it is intended
- cooperate with staff in managing their health
- as relevant to the individual, develop the understandings and skills needed to progressively manage their own health.

5. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting requirements

5.1 The NSW Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (WHS Act) requires the reporting of certain work-related incidents within given timeframes. Depending on the type of incident, Work Cover may need to be notified

5.2 Incidents and injuries are reported in accordance with the Incident Reporting Policy (intranet).

5.3 Principals will ensure that individual health care plans are reviewed at least annually

5.4 Directors, Public Schools will monitor the local implementation of this policy and report to their Executive Director, Public Schools

5.5 The Executive Director, Learning and Engagement will monitor the state-wide implementation of this policy.

Student Health Procedures at Illaroo Road Public School

Specific Points Relevant to Illaroo Road Public School

- Parents/caregivers of children requiring prescribed medication to be administered or self-administered at school must complete a written request. This is available from the office. Some parents may need help to complete the form. (See page 6: Administering prescribed medication at school)
 - The school will respond in writing to the parent's request.
 - Parents must present a medical practitioner's instructions with the medication. This may be in the form of specific up-to-date pharmacist instructions for the particular medication to be administered. (See page 7: Role of parents)
 - The expected role of parents/caregivers is summarised on page 7.
 - Unprescribed medication will not be administered (eg panadol, cough mixture, antihistamine) unless accompanied by current instructions from a medical practitioner. (See page 6: Non-prescribed medications)
 - Antibiotics will not be administered in school unless this is specifically requested by a medical practitioner. Parents can usually administer at home before school, after school and at bedtime.
 - A current Asthma Management Plan is required for all asthma medication kept for students (see page 7: Asthma)
 - Individual health care plans will be developed for:
 - Severe asthma, type 1 diabetes, epilepsy and anaphylaxis
 - Any student diagnosed as being at risk of an emergency
 - Any student requiring the administration of specific health procedures
- (See page 7: Individual health care plans)
- For the following conditions, further information is available as noted:
 - Allergies (See page 8)
 - Asthma (See page 7)
 - Anaphylaxis (See page 8)
 - Diabetes (See page 8)
 - Epilepsy (See page 9)
 - School staff are trained in CPR annually and in emergency care every three years. Staff are also kept informed of the needs of children who have an Individual Health Care Plan. Class teachers keep details in their class rolls about students with notified medical conditions.

Administering prescribed medication at school

When a medical practitioner has prescribed medication that must be administered during the school day, parents are responsible for:

- bringing this need to the attention of the school
- ensuring that the information is updated if it changes
- supplying the medication and any 'consumables' necessary for its administration in a timely way
- collaborating with the school in working out arrangements for the supply and administration of the prescribed medication. (See **role of parents**, page7)

The administration of such medication forms part the Department's common law duty of care to take reasonable steps to keep students safe while they attend school. This duty of care is fulfilled through its staff members.

Key points to remember:

- Parents of children who require prescribed medication to be administered at school must complete a written request.
- The administration staff will provide the form to the parent.
- If parents have difficulty in completing the form they should ask for assistance.
- Students must not carry medications unless there is a written agreement between the school and the student's parents that this is a planned part of the student's health care support.

Please note: Students' immediate access to prescribed medication is very important for the effective management of conditions such as asthma. Students and parents need to be advised of this requirement so that students are not left without access to critical medication.

- It is the principal's responsibility to fully inform relevant staff of the management implications of students requiring the administration of prescribed medication.
- **Except in an emergency, only individual staff members who have volunteered and been trained, will administer prescribed medication to students.**
- The principal will oversight implementation of the course of action that he or she has determined is necessary for the support of the student's health needs.

It is the principal's responsibility to ensure that all copies of the written medical advice and any other relevant documentation are stored in a secure and confidential manner.

Self-administration of prescribed medication by students

The common law duty of care does not extend to administering prescribed medication to students who are reasonably able to self-administer.

However, if a student self-administers prescribed medication the Department has a duty to take reasonable steps to ensure that the self-administration is carried out safely.

Note about Emergency Care

Schools do not supply or administer medications in an emergency unless they have been provided by parents as part of a negotiated individual health care plan for a specific student.

In an emergency which has not been anticipated in the emergency response/care section of an individual health care plan (which has been negotiated for an individual student known to be at high risk of a serious emergency reaction) staff will provide a general emergency response, eg call an ambulance.

Non-prescribed medications

In general, schools do not administer medication which has not been specifically requested by a medical practitioner for an individual student for a specific condition. In some cases the medical practitioner may not write 'a prescription' for such medication because it may be available 'over the counter'. NSW Health advises that this does not mean that the medication is not potentially harmful and that schools should follow the same procedures for such medications as for 'prescribed medications'.

Summary: Role of parents

It is the role of parents to:

- cooperate with the school on student health matters
- support their child's health
- inform the school of the health needs of the child when they enrol or when health conditions develop or change
- liaise with the child's medical practitioner about the implications of the child's health condition for their schooling
- **where medication is prescribed, ask the medical practitioner whether the medication is available in a form which minimises or eliminates the need to provide the medication during the school day**
- convey all relevant advice and information from the medical practitioner to the school
- complete a written request form (supplied by the school) for the school to administer prescribed medication or for other support
- provide prescribed medication and 'consumables' for administration by the school in a timely way and as agreed with the principal
- collaborate with the school in planning to support the child's health needs at school including updating information and reviewing plans.
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Note: Forms completed by parents will be stored securely.

It may be necessary for some information to be shared with staff in order for the school to provide support for the student.

Developing and implementing individual health care plans for students with more complex needs

An individual health care plan formalises the plan of support for students with complex health care needs.

The principal will initiate the development of such a plan in the following circumstances or when the situation is complex or where a plan would be of assistance in managing support for the student.

Individual health care plans should be developed for:

- severe asthma, type 1 diabetes, epilepsy and anaphylaxis
- any student who is diagnosed as being at risk of an emergency
- any student who requires the administration of specific health care procedures

Information from the student's medical practitioner, provided by parents, will inform the planning process.

The plan will describe the student's needs and how the school plans to meet these needs during the school day, on excursions and in other variations in school routine, such as sport.

The plan must also detail procedures to be followed if an emergency arises. Procedures need to be agreed between the parent and the school, following consultation with the relevant medical practitioner.

Plans should be reviewed annually or when the parent notifies the school that the student's health needs have changed.

Asthma

Asthma affects a significant number of children and young people.

Parents need to inform their child's school if their child has asthma.

Schools work with parents, staff and students to provide effective support to students with asthma, in line with the management recommended by the doctor.

Students with asthma need ready access to their reliever medication when an attack occurs. In most cases formal arrangements are made between the school and parents for students to carry reliever medications with them while at school and on all school related excursions.

Where the student with asthma is young, or needs assistance to administer the asthma medication, the school will consult with parents and staff to determine the best arrangement for administering the asthma medication when the student needs it.

In cases of severe asthma or where the principal determines that the student's health support needs cannot be met within existing arrangements, he or she will consult with parents and staff in developing an individual health care plan for the student.

Parents will need to provide information from the child's doctor.

Each school has a staff member trained in the administration of prescribed medications and asthma treatments.

The Department supports the Asthma Friendly Schools Program a national project of the Asthma Foundations of Australia. An asthma friendly school is one where strategies are put in place to support the whole school community in the management of asthma.

Allergies

Parents need to advise the school if their child has been diagnosed with an allergy/allergies that could affect his/her learning or wellbeing at school.

Severe allergies or [anaphylaxis](#) may result in emergencies and the school must be informed.

Anaphylaxis

Anaphylaxis is a severe and sudden allergic reaction. It occurs when a person is exposed to an allergen. Anaphylaxis is potentially life threatening and always requires an emergency response.

We have collaborated with NSW Health to develop [Anaphylaxis Guidelines for Schools \(pdf\)](#)

These outline the steps schools need to follow to manage the needs of students who have been diagnosed as being at risk of a severe allergic reaction. They recommend a case by case approach which is responsive to the needs of the individual student within the context of the particular school.

Parents will need to provide information from their child's medical practitioner. This information will be used in the development of an individual health care plan

An emergency response plan [Anaphylaxis Guidelines for schools \(see details in the guidelines document\)](#) will form part of the individual health care plan.

Note re Emergency Care

Schools do not supply or administer Epi-pens unless they have been provided by parents as part of a negotiated individual health care plan for a specific student.

In an emergency which has not been anticipated in the emergency response/care section of an individual health care plan negotiated for an individual known to be at high risk of a serious emergency reaction, staff will provide a general emergency response, eg call an ambulance.

Diabetes

There are two types of diabetes. Type 1 diabetes usually affects children and adolescents. Type 2 is more likely to affect adults. Recent evidence shows that type 2 diabetes is increasing in children and adolescents. Supporting the health needs of students with diabetes at school involves understanding and planning for their needs.

Parents need to inform the school if their child has diabetes and provide relevant information from the child's doctor when requested by the school.

The principal will consult with parents and staff in determining arrangements for supporting the student's needs. An individual health care plan for a student with type 1 diabetes will include arrangements for testing blood glucose levels and injections of insulin if necessary. There are different insulin delivery devices which are prescribed for individuals which include a syringe, pen and insulin pump. Where a pump is used it must stay attached at all times.

Arrangements may also need to be made for the student to eat snacks at different times from the rest of the class, so that their blood glucose levels can be maintained at a safe level. During physical activity the student may also require additional supervision and provision of food.

It is important that all staff in supervisory roles of the student know about [hypoglycemia](#) and how to manage it. Diabetes Australia advises that if a child diagnosed with **type 1 diabetes** is **vomiting**, the parent and/or ambulance should be called.

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a disruption in brain function that results in recurrent seizures or fits.

Most children and young people with epilepsy are of normal ability and intelligence and will be able to take part in the full range of school activities.

If prescribed medication is taken regularly, in most cases there will be no seizures at all, or very few. However all staff should be able to recognise seizures and know what to do if one occurs in the playground or classroom.

School Practices and Programs

The OH&S Act also provides that an employee must, while at work, take reasonable care for the health and safety of people who are at the employee's place of work or who may be affected by the employee's acts or omissions at work.

As a minimum this means that any staff member must, if necessary, assist in an emergency.

Where a student has been diagnosed as being at risk of an emergency reaction, the Principal will co-ordinate the development of an emergency response plan as part of the [Individual Health Care Plan](#) for the student.

Where training is needed it is essential for all staff who are likely to be called upon to administer prescribed medication or health care procedures in an emergency, to be appropriately trained by a suitable qualified person

In an emergency a staff member administers prescribed medication or health care procedures to a student in accordance with his or her training and agreements documented in the emergency care section of the student's individual health care plan.

Except in an emergency, staff administer prescribed medication or health care procedures to students on a voluntary basis.

Legal Liability

Should a student be injured or made ill as a result of the administration of prescribed medication or health care procedures by a member of staff, the staff member is protected by the legal principle of vicarious liability in relation to personal injury proceedings.

This means that unless the staff member has deliberately injured the student, or behaved with reckless disregard for the student's safety, the Department will be liable for any injury caused by the negligence of the staff member.

Summary: Role of schools in supporting students who need help with health issues

It is the role of schools to:

- take all reasonable steps to keep students safe at school
- support students in arrangements to have their health care needs met so that they can participate in their learning program
- administer prescribed medication in response to parents' written requests following consultation with staff and parents and the supply of necessary medication and consumables by parents
- administer specific health care procedures in response to parents' written requests following consultation with staff and parents and the supply of necessary medication and consumables by parents
- share medical information with others who need to know emphasising the need to use it sensitively and confidentially

- develop an individual health care plan where required or where principal determines it will be helpful
- provide emergency care
- provide support for staff to access relevant allowances and training.

Check list for schools for administering medication

It is important that the school develop routine procedures for the administration of all prescribed medication within the school.

Any routine will ensure that:

- parents are provided with relevant forms and letters
- a location/s is/are specified for the administering medication which is/are as private and easily accessible as possible for students and relevant staff
- the administration occurs at a time when privacy is easier to ensure and there is minimal disruption to school routine
- the administration occurs, as far as possible, at approximately the same time on a particular day
- the student's identification, prescribed medication, dosage and route of administration can be verified, and where possible, checked by a second person
- one person who has volunteered and is trained, is responsible for administering the prescribed medication
- alternative arrangements agreed to with parents can be implemented in case of staff absence
- a record is kept of the administration of prescribed medication
- safe hygiene practices are carried out
- non-compliance by the student is addressed as soon as possible with the parent
- prescribed medications can be administered when variations in school routine such as excursions occur
- that staff know to raise any concerns about prescribed medication or consumables that have not been supplied as agreed or unexpected side effects, with the principal so that they can be discussed with the parent.