

A Summary of the Guidelines for the Care of Students with Food Allergies

Introduction: A food allergy is an abnormal response to a food, triggered by the body's immune system (National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease [NIAID], 2020). Symptoms of a food induced allergic reaction may range from mild to severe and may become life-threatening. Reactions vary with each person. Each exposure to a food allergen and the severity of an allergic reaction is not predictable. There is no cure for food allergies. Strict avoidance of food allergens and early recognition and management of allergic reactions are important measures to prevent serious health consequences (U.S. Food and Drug Administration, 2016). Therefore, school personnel should be ready to effectively manage students with food allergies including being prepared to recognize symptoms of an allergic reaction in both diagnosed and undiagnosed students to respond to the students' emergency needs.

Purpose: In response to the increase in students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis, Senate Bill 27 (82nd Legislative Session, 2011) amended Chapter 38 of the Texas Education Code (TEC) by adding Section 38.0151. Statute requires the board of trustees of each school district and the governing body, or appropriate officers of open-enrollment charter schools, adopt and administer a policy for the care of students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis. The policy must be based on guidelines developed by the state Commissioner of Health in consultation with the Food Allergy Ad Hoc Committee. In addition, a school district or open-enrollment charter school should review and revise their policy as necessary to ensure it is consistent with the DSHS guidelines.

Approach: Caring for students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis requires a collaborative partnership with the students, parents, healthcare providers, and school staff. The school district should consider several key elements when developing the district's food allergy management plan. The goal is to promote the physical safety of children with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis and support their emotional needs. Key elements that are fundamental in developing a comprehensive food allergy management plan for schools include the following:

- Identifying students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis
- Developing, implementing, communicating, and monitoring of emergency care plans, 504 plans, or individualize health care plans for students with food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis
- Reducing exposure risk in the school setting
- Training school staff to recognize anaphylaxis and have an appropriate emergency response; and
- Reviewing school policy and procedures after an anaphylactic reaction has occurred.

These guidelines are intended to assist a district in developing and administering a policy for the care of students with diagnosed food allergies at risk for anaphylaxis.

This summary is composed of direct excerpts from the full guidelines document. For more in depth information about the Guidelines for the Care of Students with Food Allergies, please visit the full guidelines document at [Guidelines for the Care of Students with Food Allergies \(texas.gov\)](https://www.texas.gov/guidelines-for-the-care-of-students-with-food-allergies).