

# Parent/Guardian Implementation Tips

## *Tool*

**Resource:** Creating Asthma Friendly Environments

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing the school with up-to-date information about their child's asthma and the necessary medications and equipment. Information should be provided to the school at the start of each year regardless of whether the child is a new student. The school/staff should also be informed of any changes to the child's asthma that will affect their routine, performance and/or ability to participate in activities.

The following is a list of responsibilities for parents/guardians to adhere to, to support the creation of an asthma friendly school community:

- **Prepare your child for managing asthma at school:**

Educate your child so that they understand:

- How to identify and reduce exposure to their own asthma triggers.
- When their asthma is worsening and the necessary steps to take to relieve and treat the symptoms.
- Correct technique and dosing of their inhaler(s), if age appropriate.
- When to ask for assistance with their asthma.
- The importance of carrying their medication with them at all times, if age appropriate and not sharing with other students.
- Importance of being physically active.

- **Identify that your child has asthma:**

Tell the school and the teacher that your child has asthma. When the school registration form asks about health information, inform the school about your child's asthma and use of asthma medicines. Consider having your child wear a MedicAlert™ bracelet or similar device to identify that they have asthma.

- **Supporting a student with asthma is a collaborative effort:**

The *Plan of Care* is a form that helps empower and support students with prevalent medical conditions. The *Plan of Care* is part of the Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 161: Supporting Children and Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions (Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes, and/or Epilepsy) in Schools and requires that school boards develop a *Plan of Care* to support students with asthma. This form requires participation from school boards, school staff, educators, parents/guardians and students.

- **Ensure your child has easy access to asthma medication:**

- Your child needs to have easy and quick access to their inhaler. For younger children, this typically involves having the quick relief inhaler in the classroom and for older children, carrying their own inhaler. Find out about the school's procedure so that your child has easy access to their inhaler in case asthma symptoms are experienced. This involves the completion of the *Plan of Care* form. Ryan's Law requires schools to provide easy access to asthma inhalers when the necessary forms are completed and with parent/guardian permission for those less than 16 years of age.
- If your child will be carrying and administering the inhaler, ensure that your child:
  - has the reliever inhaler (usually blue) accessible at all times (the inhaler needs to be with the student every day at all times);
  - knows when and how to use the inhaler correctly;
  - knows the steps to take if the reliever medication does not relieve the symptoms or is not working
  - knows when to ask for help;
  - does not share medication with friends;

- knows the inhaler has at least 20 doses remaining;
  - has their name is on their inhaler, and that it has not expired; and
  - tells the teacher every time they take the medication; and
  - informs you (parents/guardians) that asthma symptoms were experienced at school that needed treatment with their inhaler.
- It is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to provide the child with a dedicated reliever inhaler(s) for school use that are not past their expiration date. Some students may need more than one additional inhaler for school so that an inhaler can be kept in the locker, backpack and gym bag. All inhalers need to be clearly labelled with the student's name.
  - If your child needs help using the inhaler, detail this information on their *Plan of Care*, and include information about the dosing and how to give the inhaler medications correctly. Meet with school staff caring for your child to review the accurate technique for administering the medication to your child.
  - Ensure that the asthma reliever inhaler accompanies your child on field trips. Prepare your child for field trips and discuss any issues with the supervising teacher. Ensure that your child knows how and when to use asthma medication safely.

• **Establish a process for handling worsening asthma:**

- Complete and return the *Plan of Care* to the school, which details how to manage your child's asthma at school. This form contains your child's photograph, emergency contacts, information about your child's asthma triggers and reliever medication and dosage (including where it's located) and how to recognize and respond to asthma symptoms and emergency situations. Pictures should be recent photographs of the head and shoulders, approximately 2 x 2.5" (this form will be posted in the staff room/health room and/or where appropriate, given parent/guardian permission, and in the supply/substitute teacher folder to identify students to staff).
- Provide the teacher/coach/recreation leader/bus driver with a copy of the *Plan of Care* so that they will know about your child's triggers, medications and what to do when the asthma symptoms are experienced.

- Review the *Plan of Care* with your child to make sure that they understand the plan and how their asthma is to be managed at school.

- **Identify and reduce common asthma triggers for your child within the school :**

Talk to teachers about the triggers that affect your child. Make sure that the *Plan of Care* identifies your child's asthma triggers.

- **Encourage your child to participate in physical activity and play:**

Talk to your child about the benefits of participating in physical activity and play. Do not let your child/youth's asthma be a barrier to participating in physical education class, recess, sports and other recreational activities.

- **Provide opportunities for asthma education (such as school staff, other parents/guardians, students and volunteers):**

Be an asthma resource/Asthma Champion and talk to school staff about how to create an asthma friendly school that supports children with asthma.

- **Collaborate with others (such as health care providers, public health, other parents/guardians and community partners) to create asthma friendly schools:**

Work with your health care provider to ensure that your child's asthma is under good control, that they have a quick relief inhaler for school use and that they have the asthma knowledge and skills to successfully manage their asthma at schools.