

COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL HEALTH ACTION GUIDE:

Management of Life-Threatening Conditions in the School Setting Using the JCSH Comprehensive School Health Framework

Introduction

Providing a safe and inclusive school environment is of paramount importance for all students, especially those with life-threatening health conditions¹ (LTC). While at school, students with these conditions may require emergency medical care; failure to respond can be fatal. In addition to these critical incidents, schools provide supports and adaptations on a daily basis to meet the health needs of students with LTC and to promote their well-being.

The pan-Canadian Joint Consortium for School Health's *Comprehensive School Health Framework* can be used to address a number of school health topics, including life-threatening health conditions. An integrated, holistic approach to promoting health in the school setting, Comprehensive School Health (CSH) can assist and be applied by schools to take a more holistic approach to supporting students with these conditions. The CSH approach is based on evidence which shows that the greatest impact on student health and learning is achieved when action is taken across the entire school, addressing four distinct but inter-related pillars: 1) teaching and learning; 2) social and physical environment; 3) healthy school policy; and 4) partnerships and services. When actions in all four pillars are harmonized, students are supported to realize their full potential as learners, and as healthy, productive members of society. For more information on CSH and the Joint Consortium for School Health, see the following link: www.jcsh-cces.ca.



This document can assist school communities in promoting LTC management using the four pillars of the Joint Consortium's CSH Framework. Some of the suggested activities take a little effort, and some of them take a bit more. Remember to start small and be patient – change is often a long-term endeavour. Consider initiating activities that meet the needs of your students and the capacity of your school or district.

¹ LTCs may include anaphylaxis, asthma, diabetes, seizure disorders, head injuries and more.

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Teaching and Learning

- Provide information sessions and training opportunities for school staff, students, parents and support staff (ie. coaches, cafeteria staff, cleaning staff, bus drivers, educational assistants, volunteers, and substitute teachers). Sessions/training may promote knowledge of:
 - Basic medical information about LTCs
 - Recognizing the signs and symptoms of an emergency
 - How to respond in a medical emergency
 - Proper administration of medication and use of medical devices
 - Preventative measures

Note that consideration should be given to the accessibility and frequency of such information sessions and training opportunities.

- Find opportunities for teachable moments around LTCs, and consider different mediums for sharing information in the classroom (e.g. books, videos, games).
- Work with affected students to educate their peers about their LTC, as appropriate.
- Post educational materials in the school and school community regarding different LTCs



Social and Physical Environment

- Provide appropriate storage to ensure quick access to medication and devices in the event of an emergency.
- Offer private space for students to manage their condition, as needed.
- Work to improve both conditions in the school environment and school community that often trigger a reaction or event (e.g. foods, ingredients used in school supplies, mold, pests, clutter/dust, smoking, certain cleaning products).
- Create a school environment that promotes inclusivity, reduces stigma and respects each student's differences. Prevent and respond to incidents of exclusion and bullying.



Partnerships and Services

- Establish partnerships with community health professionals, families and students. Define the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
- Establish mechanisms for communication with key partners around LTC management (ie. letters sent to the home, newsletter inserts, website postings)
- Identify resources in the community that might be of assistance to schools in preventing and/or dealing with life-threatening conditions:
 - materials, resources and information from non-governmental organizations
 - presentations from community health professionals



Healthy School Policy

- Develop school policies and procedures relating to LTC management using input from a variety of stakeholders in the school and school community. These policies may consider:
 - The provision of quality, accessible and frequent education and training to those in the school and school community.
 - Definition of, and basic facts on, LTCs
 - Process for identifying students with LTCs
 - Process for keeping a record related to each identified student
 - Process for principals to monitor and report on health incidents
 - Process for establishing student and district emergency procedure plans
 - Procedures for storage and administration of medications and devices
 - Awareness, prevention and avoidance strategies
 - Training strategies
 - Communications plans
- Distribute school policies and procedures relating LTC management to all families at the beginning of the school year, and reminders can be published in school newsletters/bulletins/websites on a regular basis.

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