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## **SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH PREVALENT MEDICAL CONDITIONS (ANAPHYLAXIS, ASTHMA, DIABETES, AND / OR EPILEPSY)**

### **1.0 Rationale**

District School Board Ontario North East believes in supporting students with prevalent medical conditions in order that these students fully access school in a safe, accepting, and healthy learning environment which includes supporting their well-being. In addition, the Board believes in:

- empowering students with prevalent medical conditions to be confident and capable learners who can reach their full potential for self-management of their medical conditions, according to their plan of care;
- supporting parents in feeling confident that their child is safe at school and during school related activities, and has the same opportunities as other students to fully access the education system;
- creating a collaborative approach with the student, parents, principal, school staff and health care professionals, to ensure a full understanding of the prevalent medical conditions, supports, clarity of roles and communication associated with the student's Plan of Care;
- ensuring the appropriate staff are familiar with the prevalent medical conditions as outlined in the Plan of Care and are trained and confident in prevention strategies to minimize risks, recognize the symptoms of a medical emergency and know the steps to follow in dealing with a medical emergency

### **2.0 Definitions**

**Anaphylaxis** (pronounced anna-fill-axis): is a serious and possibly life-threatening allergic reaction that requires immediate recognition and intervention.

Symptoms can vary from person to person and may include:

- Skin: hives, swelling (face, lips, and tongue), itching, warmth, redness;
- Breathing (respiratory): coughing, wheezing, shortness of breath, chest pain/tightness, throat tightness, hoarse voice, nasal congestion or hay fever-like symptoms (runny, itchy nose and watery eyes, sneezing), trouble swallowing;
- Stomach (gastrointestinal): nausea, pain/cramps, vomiting, diarrhea;
- Heart (cardiovascular): paler than normal/blue skin colour, weak pulse, passing out, dizziness or light-headedness, shock;
- Other: anxiety, sense of "doom" (the feeling that something bad is about to happen), headache, uterine cramps, metallic taste.

**Asthma:** as defined by the Ontario Lung Association, is a very common chronic (long-term) lung disease that can make it hard to breathe. People with asthma have sensitive airways that react to triggers. There are many different types of triggers such as, poor air quality, mold, dust, pollen, viral infections, animals, smoke and cold air. The symptoms can cause mild to severe reactions and be fatal.

Common asthma symptoms include:

- Shortness of breath;
- Wheezing (whistling sound from inside the chest);
- Difficulty breathing;
- Chest tightness; and
- Coughing.

**Epilepsy:** results from sudden bursts of hyperactivity in the brain; this causes “seizures” which vary in form, strength, and frequency, depending on where in the brain abnormal activity is found. Epilepsy is the diagnosis and seizures are the symptom. If a person has two (2) or more seizures that are not related to another condition, that person will be diagnosed as having epilepsy.

**Good Samaritan Act:** In 2001, the Ontario government passed this legislation to protect individuals from liability with respect to voluntary emergency medical or first-aid services.

Subsections 2(1) and (2) of this Act state the following with regard to individuals:

2.(1) Despite the rules of common law, a person described in subsection (2) who voluntarily and without reasonable expectation of compensation or reward provides the services described in that subsection is not liable for damages that result from the person’s negligence in acting or failing to act while providing the services, unless it is established that the damages were caused by the gross negligence of the person.

(2) Subsection (1) applies to,

...(b) an individual ...who provides emergency first aid assistance to a person who is ill, injured or unconscious as a result of an accident or other emergency, if the individual provides the assistance at the immediate scene of the accident or emergency.

**Health Care Professional:** a member of a College under the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (e.g., medical doctor, nurse practitioner, registered nurse, pharmacist).

**Health Care Provider:** may be a Physician, Nurse Practitioner, Registered Nurse, Pharmacist, Respiratory Therapist, Certified Respiratory Educator, or Certified Asthma Educator.

**Immunity:** in relation to the Act to protect students diagnosed with Asthma (Ryan’s Law), immunity means “no action or other proceeding for damages shall be commenced against the employee for an act or omission done or omitted by the employee in good faith in the execution of any duty or power under this Act”.

In relation to the Act to protect students diagnosed with Anaphylaxis (Sabrina’s Law), immunity means “no action for damages shall be instituted respecting any act done in good faith or for any neglect or

default in good faith in response to an anaphylactic reaction in accordance with this Act, unless the damages are the result of an employee's gross negligence".

**Medical Emergency:** is an acute injury or illness that poses an immediate risk to a person's life or long-term health and requires assistance from another qualified person and contact with Emergency Medical Services.

**Medical Incident:** a circumstance that requires an immediate response and monitoring, since the incident may progress to an emergency requiring contact with Emergency Medical Services.

**Parents:** parent(s) and guardian(s).

**Plan of Care:** a form that contains individualized information on a student with a prevalent medical condition.

**Prevalent Medical Conditions:** for the purposes of this policy refer to the medical conditions of students in schools who have asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and/or anaphylaxis as diagnosed by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner.

**School:** all school and school-board activities, including field trips, overnight excursions, board-sponsored sporting events, and board-operated before- and afterschool programs for children aged 4 to 12 years.

**School staff:** all school staff, including occasional staff.

**Self-Management:** a continuum where a student's cognitive, emotional, social and physical capacity and stage of development are determinants of their ability to confidently and independently manage their medical conditions(s). The students' journey to reach their full potential along the self-management continuum is not linear and can require varying levels of support over time. A student's capacity for self-management may be compromised during certain medical incidents, and additional support will be required.

**Students:** children in Kindergarten and students in Grades 1 to 12.

**Type 1 Diabetes:** a chronic condition where the pancreas stops producing insulin, a hormone that helps the body control the level of glucose (sugar) in your blood. The body produces glucose, and also gets it from foods that contain carbohydrates, such as bread, potatoes, rice, pasta, milk and fruit. Without insulin, glucose builds up in the blood instead of being used by your cells for energy. A lack of insulin can cause both short-term and long-term health problems.

Symptoms of undiagnosed type 1 diabetes include:

- Increased thirst;
- Increased urination;
- A lack of energy; and
- Weight loss.

**Type 2 Diabetes** – can also affect children and youth, but it is more common in adults. With type 2 diabetes, the body does not respond well to insulin, and the pancreas cannot produce enough insulin to

compensate. Type 2 diabetes can often be managed through changes to diet and lifestyle, as well as with oral medications (pills). Some children with type 2 diabetes may need insulin injections.

### **3.0 Policy**

It is the policy of District School Board Ontario North East to provide a framework and direction to align administrative procedures that support students with prevalent medical conditions who have been diagnosed with asthma, diabetes, epilepsy and/or anaphylaxis. This policy applies to all students with prevalent medical conditions as defined from Kindergarten to grade twelve (12) or age twenty-one (21) within the District School Board Ontario North East.

District School Board Ontario North East recognizes that supporting students with prevalent medical conditions is complex. A whole-school approach with caring is needed where education and community partners, including health care professionals, have important roles to play in promoting student health and safety and in fostering and maintaining healthy and safe learning environments.

The Board believes that in supporting students with prevalent medical conditions, it does so within a culture of collaborative professionalism that is grounded in a trusting environment where schools, the Board, the Ministry and employee groups create the necessary conditions to learn with, and from, each other.

The procedures must be reviewed annually by all employees and volunteers who are in direct contact on a regular basis with students of the Board. This is in accordance with Ryan's Law, ensuring asthma friendly schools, Sabrina's Law, and PPM 161: Supporting children and students with prevalent medical conditions (Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes, and/or Epilepsy).