



CHESTERFIELD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Marcus J. Newsome, Ed.D., Superintendent

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Student and staff safety is a top priority

Earlier this week, a first-grade student at Hopkins Elementary School died. Chesterfield County Public Schools is deeply saddened by the loss of this child and has reached out to her family. The school division is providing ongoing support for the students and staff at Hopkins.

As part of its goal of providing a safe, supportive and nurturing learning environment, Chesterfield County Public Schools has an extensive plan for managing severe allergies and a School Board policy covering the administration of medication. Chesterfield County Public Schools and the Chesterfield County Health Department collaborated to develop new guidelines for managing severe allergies in schools. The guidelines were reviewed and OK'd by the Health Department, local physicians and the School Health Advisory Board in May 2011.

Here's how Chesterfield County Public Schools manages student health concerns: With physician and parent approval, health emergency plans are initiated for students with severe allergies. Appropriate school staff members are trained to administer emergency epinephrine to students for whom it is prescribed by a doctor. Allergy awareness information sessions have been provided to school staff members to educate them about the prevalence of severe allergies, the importance of preventing allergic reactions, early recognition of symptoms and treatment. Public health nurses provide case management for students with health concerns, providing instruction and education to school staff members to meet the health needs of the students.

The school division's severe allergy plan has been reviewed by internal and external experts and is in line with state and national best practices. One local doctor was quoted on television this week saying, "It was an excellent plan. In fact, I read through the entire plan and found it to be very thorough." A noted allergy specialist said that Chesterfield County Public Schools is "way ahead of the curve" in terms of developing strong guidelines, informing parents and educating the community about managing severe allergies.

Key to the school division's plan to manage severe allergies is a parent's responsibility to provide the school with accurate, timely information; a health emergency plan approved by a local physician; and the medicine necessary to execute the plan. If any one of these items is missing, the doctor's orders cannot be carried out.

Chesterfield County Public Schools accepts medication that is either prescribed by a doctor or purchased over the counter – both must be brought to school by a parent. Many students do have EpiPens at school; their EpiPens may be kept in the school's clinic or may stay with the student, depending on what their physician prescribes. All over-the-counter medication must remain in the school clinic.

If a student's health emergency plan calls for prescription or over-the-counter medicine and it is not provided to the school, the public health nurse contacts the family to obtain the necessary medication. The school division relies on parents to follow through.

The safety and security of students and staff members is a top priority of Chesterfield County Public Schools. The school division works daily to achieve that goal.

About Chesterfield County Public Schools

More than 58,000 students attend Chesterfield County Public Schools. Health Department data for the 2011-2012 school year show that there are

- 540 students with documented food allergies with emergency epinephrine prescribed
- 75 students with documented insect sting allergies with emergency epinephrine prescribed
- 19 students with a documented severe latex allergy with emergency epinephrine prescribed

For 2011-12, 0.92 percent of students in Chesterfield County Public Schools have documented food allergies with epinephrine prescribed.

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