

What **parents** should know...

Facts about the Student Inhaler Law

Wisconsin Statute 118.291 allows students with asthma to carry and use metered dose and dry powder inhalers with written permission.

Why does Wisconsin have a student inhaler law?

- Asthma is a life-threatening disease.
- An asthma attack requires immediate treatment with prescribed rescue medication.
- There may not be time to access medication stored in a central, not easily accessible location if an asthma attack occurs on the playground, in the gymnasium, on the school bus, on a field trip or in the classroom.

Overview of the law

- A child may carry inhaled asthma medication with him/her at school (locker, pocket, backpack, etc.).
- Inhaled asthma medications do not need to be locked away in a central location if the parent/guardian and the physician provide the school with written permission.
- The school cannot enforce a policy that contradicts this law.

What are the schools' concerns?

- **Student's ability to responsibly carry and self-administer medication:**
 - Will student consistently carry medication particularly when exercising?
 - Will student dismiss or exaggerate asthma?
 - Will student misuse or abuse asthma medication?
- **Risk management issues related to prescription medication and treatment:**
 - Is the medication properly labeled?
 - Does staff have adequate knowledge about asthma and its life-threatening risks?
 - Can staff properly administer asthma medication?
- Insufficient time, staff, resources and knowledge to provide health care.
- Misconceptions about the difference between inhalers and inhalants.
- Parents not regularly communicating students' asthma-related needs.
- Parents' unrealistic demands or expectations.
- Privacy issues related to sharing student health information with other staff.

What are health care providers' concerns?

- May not know the patient well enough to help.
- Limited time to discuss issue or assess patient readiness/maturity level.
- Reluctance to get involved with school/parent politics and emotions.
- May not fully understand the inhaler law and his/her role in achieving compliance.
- More paperwork to process and sign.

What can parents do?

Communicate

- **Meet with your child's health care provider to:**
 - evaluate your child's asthma,
 - learn more about asthma and proper inhaler use,
 - develop an asthma action plan for school personnel and
 - request a prescription for multiple inhalers for home, school and extracurricular activities.
- Discuss and agree on the appropriateness of your child carrying the inhaler at school with both your child and his/her health care provider. Consider the health care provider's perspective.
- Talk with your child to assess his/her ability and maturity level to self-administer medication. Factor in the school's perspective.
- Arrange a meeting with your child's teachers (classroom, physical education, music, etc.) to discuss medication use. Reassure them of your child's competency and help them understand his/her asthma triggers and symptoms.
- Avoid being confrontational when talking to school personnel. Keep an open mind.
- Ask your principal or school nurse if the school has and requires an inhaler permission form. Get a sample form by contacting the American Lung Association of Wisconsin.
- Keep in touch. Check in periodically with your child and school staff to see how things are going.

Take Action

- Obtain a copy of Wisconsin Statute 118.291 from the Lung Association.
- Sign the permission form. Parent/guardian and health care provider should sign and date the original to verify receipt. Keep one copy for yourself.
- Provide school staff with a clearly written asthma action plan.
- Seek compromise. If the school or health care provider feels your child is not ready to self-administer medication, work to find an acceptable solution.
- Urge your child's school to contact the Lung Association to arrange a staff in-service on childhood asthma.

Resources

American Lung Association of Wisconsin

www.lungusa.org/wisconsin • 800.LUNG.USA/(586.4872)

Department of Health and Family Services • www.dhfs.state.wi.us

Department of Public Instruction • www.dpi.state.wi.us

Wisconsin State Legislature • www.legis.state.wi.us