

September 12, 2016

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New law to help students with asthma in school

Legislation Helps Illinois Schools and Educators Prepare for Student Asthma Emergencies

Chicago, IL -- A new law signed by Governor Bruce Rauner on Aug. 19, 2016 will help schools prepare for serious asthma attacks in school. State Representative Robyn Gabel (18th District) and State Senator Dave Koehler (46th District) were original sponsors of the legislation.

“Because children spend much of their day in school, teachers and school staff play a crucial role in protecting students with asthma,” said Amy Zimmerman, Director of Chicago’s Medical-Legal Partnership for Children, a program of Legal Council for Health Justice.

The legislation ([Public Act 99-0843](#)) requires the Illinois State Board of Education to develop a model emergency response protocol, and for school districts to implement their emergency protocols by January 1, 2017. It also requires school staff who work with students with asthma to complete training. Schools need to request an asthma action plan each year from parents or guardians of a student with asthma.

“In Illinois, nearly 1 in 6 children have asthma, but over 76% of those children do not have their asthma under control,” said Stacy Ignoffo, Director of Chicago Asthma Consortium. “Asthma that is not controlled properly can lead to asthma emergencies in the school setting, as well as increased emergency department visits and hospitalizations.”

Asthma is a common chronic lung condition that can be controlled through proper medication management and trigger avoidance. It is a leading cause of school absenteeism. Children with asthma miss twice as many school days as other children, on average.

“This law will better equip schools to handle asthma emergencies,” said Joel Africk, President and CEO of Respiratory Health Association. “Healthy students are better learners. Proper asthma management leads to improved attendance and better health outcomes.”

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Legal Council for Health Justice uses the power of the law to secure dignity, opportunity, and well-being for people facing barriers due to illness and disability. All programs partner with health and hospital systems to train and support the care provider network, provide direct representation to referred patients, and conduct systemic advocacy to promote health equity among populations facing chronic, disabling, and stigmatizing health and social conditions.
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Chicago Asthma Consortium a coalition of medical and public health professionals, business leaders, government agencies, community-based organizations, and individuals dedicated to improving the quality of life for people with asthma through advocacy, education and collaboration.
www.chicagoasthma.org

Respiratory Health Association has been a public health leader in metropolitan Chicago since 1906. Today, we address asthma, COPD, lung cancer, tobacco control and air quality with a comprehensive approach involving research, education and advocacy activities. www.lungchicago.org