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Governor Signs New ‘Stock Asthma Rescue Medication’ Law Making Schools Safer for Children with Asthma

Illinois schools are one step closer to creating a safer environment for students living with asthma. Stock Asthma Rescue Medication in Schools (SB 3015) was passed by the Illinois Legislature this spring and signed into law by Governor Bruce Rauner on August 3rd.

Illinois now joins ten other states including Indiana and Missouri in adopting similar policies regarding stock asthma medication. Early results in other states indicate that these policies reduce the need for 911 calls and EMS transports as a result of asthma attacks. Initial data also demonstrate that these policies reach populations of need and improve health outcomes.

Stock Asthma Rescue Medication in Schools—SB3015, now [Public Act 100-0726](#)—improves access to life-saving medication by allowing schools to stock ‘undesigned’ asthma rescue medication and allowing school nurses and trained school staff to administer the medication at the first signs of respiratory distress. This legislation builds on a 2014 Illinois law allowing schools to stock undesigned epinephrine auto-injectors to protect those who may experience a severe allergy in school.

Across Illinois, more than 330,000 children have reported asthma; however, fewer than twenty-five percent of those children have their asthma under proper control. That means three out of four kids living with asthma are likely to experience symptoms of respiratory distress, leading to increased emergency department visits and hospitalizations.

“We applaud our lawmakers for their leadership and for taking this important action which will better equip schools to handle asthma emergencies,” said Joel Africk, President and CEO of Respiratory Health Association. “This new law, which allows schools to stock asthma rescue medication, builds on existing school policies to create a safer environment for all. We look forward to working with all stakeholders on the implementation of this law.”

“Asthma attacks can occur without warning and because of this, children with asthma should always have access to asthma rescue medication (Albuterol). Asthma rescue medication administration in a school setting allows kids to remain in the classroom and avoids costly emergency room visits. Without this medication, the attack often worsens

and can become life-threatening,” said Craig E. Batterman, MD, Associate Professor, Department of Pediatrics, Southern Illinois University Medicine.

Asthma causes an estimated 300,000 missed schools days per year in Illinois, which in turn leads to days of work missed by adult caregivers. Asthma-related annual health care costs in Illinois are projected to reach \$1.9 billion by 2020.

“Illinois has made great strides in helping children with asthma attend school without the fear that their schools will be unprepared for an inevitable asthma attack,” said State Senator Dave Koehler (D-Peoria). “SB 3015 will help children even more by allowing asthma medication to be kept at the school, similar to EpiPens.”

“Thankfully, administering albuterol has minimal side effects. By comparison, the consequences of not treating or delaying treatment of a child experiencing respiratory distress can be dangerous. SB 3015 will give schools the ability to quickly respond to asthma emergencies and work with students and families on proper asthma management at school,” said Amy Zimmerman, a Program Director at Legal Council for Health Justice.

Respiratory Health Association and Legal Council for Health Justice worked together to pursue a stock asthma rescue medication policy in Illinois. They published an issue brief assessing the fit and feasibility of stock asthma rescue medication in Illinois schools, which is available for download on Respiratory Health Association’s [website lungchicago.org](http://www.lungchicago.org).

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Respiratory Health Association has been a local public health leader in Illinois since 1906. The organization remains committed to advancing innovative and meaningful policies and programs to improve the lives of those living with asthma. We have been one of the state’s leading advocates for asthma prevention and management policies and provide asthma management programs for underserved communities. For more information, visit www.lungchicago.org.

Legal Council for Health Justice conducts education, outreach, and advocacy to address discrimination, disadvantage, and disparities in health, wealth, and well-being across the lifespan of vulnerable populations. Through our award winning medical-legal partnerships we target people impacted by chronic, disabling and stigmatizing health and social conditions to empower them to lead fulfilling lives, reach their self-determined goals, and secure and plan their futures. For more information visit www.legalcouncil.org.