

UPDATES ON FOOD ALLERGY MANAGEMENT

Late last year Congress passed the Food Safety Modernization Act which contained the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Management Act (FAAMA). In January of this year President Obama signed this into law. FAAMA provides guidelines for schools to help them manage food allergies. While these guidelines are voluntary, they will provide schools without existing food allergy management policies with a valuable resource. In addressing this at our school, a new section is included in the Student Handbook that serves as an outline on how St. Frances Cabrini will be handling food allergies.

We need the support of every teacher, volunteer, student and parent in taking steps towards reducing potential allergic reactions. We are looking to increase everyone's awareness in order to create a safer environment for our students with allergies. There are several things that we can do to accomplish our goal of becoming an allergy sensitive school.

The number of children with food allergies continues to rise, without reason or cure in sight. Some of the allergies can be life threatening. Currently, food allergens are classified into 8 categories, these are: milk, soy, peanut, tree nut, wheat, egg, fish and shellfish.

Everyone needs to be aware that allergies exist, sometimes in our child's classroom. It is important to know that an allergen does not have to be eaten for an allergic reaction to occur. If a child's skin comes in contact with an allergen, a reaction can take place. For this reason it is important to know if there are any food restrictions in the classroom and adhere to the restriction. Be sure to inform your children the importance of NOT sharing food in the classroom, on the playground or in the lunchroom.

Explain to your children the importance of hand washing before and after eating. Not only does hand washing remove any potential allergens and the threat of cross-contamination, it also removes germs that are responsible for many illnesses. Cross-contamination occurs when an allergen is placed onto another surface and transferred to an individual with an allergy.

All the teachers will be receiving an in-service about life threatening allergies so they can become a better resource for education and information.

It takes a community to raise a child with food allergies, and our school is part of that community. The school can play a significant role in the health and self-esteem of children with food allergies. With relatively little effort, our school can help protect children from accidental ingestions and also help recognize and in cases, treat anaphylaxis.

As we continue to draft our guidelines, we will send information home to explain how you can help. Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. If you have concerns or are uncertain about any portion of this letter, please feel free to call or email.