



Advocates for Justice and Education, Inc.

The federally designated Parent Training and Information Center for Washington DC

Asthma: The Leading Cause of Absenteeism

Fall and Winter are the worst seasons for children with asthma because they are exposed to more respiratory viruses, frequent air temperature changes and indoor allergens. Parents and schools working together can play important role in helping students manage asthma at school.

Uncontrolled asthma can result in lowered academic performance for a child with asthma as they struggle focus in the classroom while managing active symptoms, miss classroom instruction to receive treatments in the nurse's office, or miss school entirely because of their asthma symptoms. Some children are so impacted by their asthma that they require a 504 plan or IEP at school. Effective asthma management can have positive results for students and parents; it reduces the time children spend of out of school, and the amount of time parents miss from work because of their children's asthma.

Part of effective asthma management is the creation of an action plan for school and at home. This action plan should include daily management guidelines and emergency steps in case of an asthma episode. The plan should describe the student's medical information and specific steps for responding to worsening asthma symptoms. Symptoms may include coughing, wheezing, chest tightness and shortness of breath. The asthma action plan should include a list of medications the student receives and dispensing requirements, a specific plan of action for school staff, identified triggers, and emergency procedures. **The student should be also understand their plan and know how to access care if they need it.**

An asthma action plan should be developed by a licensed health care provider or physician, signed by a parent and the physician, kept on file at the school, and renewed every year. Schools may have particular forms they require for the plan, and they can ask that medication have all their original labels.

Talk to your Doctor about annual flu shots, indoor allergy management and asthma/allergy triggers. This is especially true in the winter when some indoor allergies can be made worse by how your home heated. Even if you child isn't showing any symptoms it is important to stay compliant with the plan you created with the child's doctor in order to prevent future episodes.