

Dear School Nurse,

Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease in the United States. Asthma affects nearly one in thirteen school-aged children and at least 5 million children in America have asthma. However, asthma is controllable and with proper treatment and support, children can lead normal lives. Why should schools be concerned about asthma? Although most asthma episodes can be prevented with proper treatment and communication between parents and school staff, asthma can be life threatening. An episode can come on suddenly requiring the student and staff to respond quickly to a life-threatening emergency. This raises several questions about your school's level of preparedness to handle such an emergency.

In 2005, Arizona passed two laws related to the rights of school-aged children with asthma. If your school district has not updated its policies, then this is a golden opportunity for you, the school nurse, to step up and take the lead in offering your expertise to implement the policy. Here are some essential components of a school asthma policy that complement these laws:

- Asthma Action Plan - developed with input from provider, parent, student and school nurse
- Demonstrated skill in medication administration for symptom management
- Staff, teach, parent and child education
- Extra rescue medication retained in health office for emergency use