



## Office of Children and Family Services

KATHY HOCHUL  
Governor

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Acting Commissioner

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Dear Provider,

The Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) declares May “National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month”. This year’s theme is **empowering** individuals, families, and the community to save and improve lives for people with asthma and allergies. To support this effort, we are sending important updates and reminders about allergy awareness initiatives in New York State. Please read this letter carefully and reach out to your district or regulator with questions.

### **Become an Allergy Ally!**

Being an allergy ally means you are part of a community that supports people with allergies. By showing your support, you help create a safe and inclusive place for all. To take the pledge to be a Food Allergy Research and Education (FARE) ally and champion, click here: [Pledge to be an Ally and Champion - FoodAllergy.org](https://www.foodallergy.org/pledge).

### **Do You Know What to Do?**

Child care providers play an important role in the health and well-being of children. Children with a diagnosed allergy rely on their caregivers to prevent exposure to allergens and to have a plan in place in the event of allergic reaction. Children in your program may experience events for the first time, including new foods and insect bites. There is no way to predict when a child will have an allergic reaction. If it were to occur, do you and your staff know what to do? If the answer to this question is not a resounding “YES!” educate yourself and your staff **today**. Here’s how:

OCFS developed a training, *Identifying and Responding to Anaphylaxis* to help you gain knowledge about allergies, anaphylaxis prevention, and what to do in an allergy-related medical emergency. The training also discusses the signs and symptoms of allergic reactions, including when to use an epinephrine auto-injector.

- The Anaphylaxis Policy for Child Care requires child care staff at licensed and registered programs to be trained on allergy prevention and anaphylaxis.
- This 90-minute online training is available at no cost.
- The training counts towards an individual’s 30-hour biennial training requirement, for licensed and registered programs, or the 5 hour per year training requirement for group and non-relative Legally Exempt programs.
- This training satisfies the training requirement for programs who stock non-patient specific epinephrine auto-injectors. Once an individual in a licensed, registered, or legally exempt group child care program completes an approved training, they are eligible to administer non-patient specific epinephrine, or be named as the designee for the auto injector(s). **This certification does not expire.**

*Identifying and Responding to Anaphylaxis*. can be found at:

<https://www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu/mytraining/guest/Login.aspx>, or by scanning the QR code located at the bottom righthand corner of the *What is Anaphylaxis* poster.

In support of allergy awareness month there are additional training opportunities added to the Early Childhood Education and Training Program (ECETP)calendar. To register for a virtual classroom training called: *Do You Know Why: The Importance of Understanding Allergies* visit:

<https://www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu/FindTraining.aspx?Prog=VC>

This course provides an overview of why New York State Day Care has regulations, policies, forms, and initiatives related to allergy awareness.

### **SUCCESS STORIES!**

The purpose of stocking non-patient specific epinephrine is to be prepared in the event of an anaphylaxis emergency. Much like fire extinguishers, you have them in your program hoping you will never need to use them. In recent months, programs have reached out to share that they needed to utilize their stock epinephrine. In three instances, programs administered the medication to children enrolled in their program. On one occasion, the stock epinephrine was administered to staff who exhibited symptoms of anaphylaxis. These providers (and parents) have expressed such gratitude for having had this life-saving medication on hand when it was needed. We are thrilled to report everyone is doing well and express our sincere gratitude to those staff who did exactly what we needed them to do in these situations; you are champions! These success stories further highlight the critical role child care providers play in keeping people safe. **OCFS strongly encourages all licensed, registered and legally exempt group child care programs to stock epinephrine.**

### **Epinephrine Auto-Injector Disposal**

The FDA does not consider the epinephrine salts in epinephrine auto-injectors to be hazardous waste. Therefore, epinephrine auto-injectors that have been used for their intended purpose or have expired, should be disposed of in the same manner as other sharps.

Several methods of disposing syringes and other sharps collection sites exist. All hospitals and nursing homes in New York State are mandated by law to accept home-generated sharps as a free, community service through their sharps collection programs. Call first and ask to speak with the facility's sharps coordinator for hours of operation, directions, drop-off sites, etc.

In addition, pharmacies, health clinics, community-based organizations, mobile van programs, public transportation facilities, housing projects, police stations, waste transfer stations and other venues have become settings for safe sharps and offer syringe collection drop boxes (or "kiosks") to help facilitate the safe collection of used sharps.

If the epinephrine auto-injector is administered by a health care provider (i.e., a nurse), the device must be disposed of as regulated medical waste not a home-generated sharp.

### **EMPOWER YOUR PROGRAM**

In the five years since Elijah's Law was passed we have made great progress toward understanding allergies and improving practices in child care programs. Much like the children we serve, we continue to evolve each day. What matters most is that when we know better, we do better. Thank you for arming your program with this life-saving information!

If you have any questions, please visit the OCFS Allergy Awareness & Elijah's Law tab at: [Allergy Awareness & Elijah's Law | Division of Child Care Services | OCFS \(ny.gov\)](#).

Sincerely,



Nora K. Yates  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Child Care Services