Department of Education
Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

Parents' Guide to School Health and Safety 2008-09

Keeping Your Child Safe

The Department of Education works hard every day, in partnership with the New York Police Department, to keep your child safe and secure. If you are aware of a safety-related matter, you should contact your child's school immediately. Here are some of the measures we take to make our schools as safe and secure as possible:

- **School Safety Plans.** At the beginning of each school year, schools develop School Safety Plans, which outline the procedures that schools use every day and in case of emergency. In order to ensure safety for all students and staff, the specific plans and procedures of School Safety Plans must remain confidential.
- **Emergency Information.** In the event of an emergency, school personnel works in collaboration with the Department of Education, the Police Department, the New York City Office of Emergency Management, as well as State and Federal agencies, to ensure the safety and security of students and school staff.
- **Citywide Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures (the Discipline Code).** Students are provided with a copy of the Discipline Code each year in early September. This document provides a comprehensive description of unacceptable behavior, as well as the range of permissible disciplinary and intervention measures that may be used when students engage in such behaviors. The Discipline Code applies to all students, including those with disabilities.

Keeping Your Child Healthy

The Department of Education works with the City's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to offer a variety of programs and services to make sure your children are healthy and ready to learn. These include school health services, as well as physical education and healthy school food.

If your child is new to school:

- If your child is attending a New York City public school for the first time, you must present a Child and Adolescent Health Examination Form (CH 205 previously known as 211S), which is available online at www.nyc.gov/Schools/Offices/Health/CH205 and should be completed by a licensed medical provider within one year of school entry. Medical requirements for new entrants are available online at www.nyc.gov/Schools/Offices/Health/MedReq2008.
- State law requires that your children receive immunizations against poliomyelitis, mumps, measles, diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, rubella, Haemophilus influenza type (Hib), Hepatitis B, Varicella, and TDAP in order to attend school unless you obtain a medical or religious exemption. Information about immunization requirements is available online at www.nyc.gov/Schools/Offices/Health.

In case of emergency:

- In suspected cases of communicable disease, environmental illness, or food-borne illness, schools will immediately notify the Office of School Health, which will conduct an investigation. If the investigation results indicate that notification of the school community is warranted, the Office of School Health will provide principals with letters to be distributed to classrooms and provide on-site nursing and medical support as needed.
- Nurses and other staff are available in elementary and middle schools to assist your child in taking medication during school hours and to evaluate health problems. Our staff can often help your child if we have a medication order from your doctor. If you have any questions, please contact your school nurse.
- Each school has at least one Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and trained responders on-site. An AED is used in an emergency when a person is not breathing. The AED checks the heart's rhythm for any abnormalities and, if needed, gives an electrical shock to the person. This shock may help the heart to restore an effective rhythm of its own.

Keeping your child healthy every day:

- Health Centers: Approximately 120 of our school buildings house a School-Based Health Center. These centers bring the services of a doctor's office to schools so that students can avoid health-related absences. Any child can be enrolled regardless of insurance or immigration status. The services are provided at no cost. We urge you to enroll your children if their school has one, so that they can receive these services.
- Mental Health: School-based mental health services play a vital role in addressing behavioral and emotional difficulties that can interfere with a child's ability to perform academically. The Office of School Health facilitates partnerships with mental health providers by enhancing the accessibility of mental health resources and programs in our schools. Ask your school guidance counselor, social worker, or parent coordinator to see if your child's school offers these services.
- Obesity: Almost half of New York City students are overweight. In addition, many are not getting the physical activity they need. The Department of Education is now sending an annual "NYC FITNESSGRAM" to many parents. This is an individualized progress report that describes your child's level of health-related fitness. For more information about fitness and health education please visit www.nyc.gov/Schools/Academics/FitnessandHealth.
- School Food: Over the last three years, SchoolFood has made healthy changes to breakfasts, lunches, and snacks. Today, school food is more nutritious than ever before. Many students are eligible for free or reduced price meals. Parents should complete the School Meals Application Form, available at your school, in order to qualify for free or reduced price ($0.25) meals. Students who are not eligible for free or reduced price meals, or who do not return a form, can purchase lunch for $1.50. Breakfast is free and available to all students. Visit our Web site, www.opt-osfns.org/osfns, for menus, nutritional guidelines, healthy snacks, and other information about school food.

Respect for All

We expect our schools to be safe and supportive learning environments for all students. Bullying behavior, slurs, verbal harassment, and physical violence have no place in City schools, especially if such behavior is prompted by prejudice, intolerance, or fear of difference. This policy is in effect on school grounds, school buses, and at all school-sponsored activities, programs, and events.

The Citywide Standards of Discipline and Intervention Measures prohibit students from bullying other students for any reason, including taunting or intimidation through the use of epithets involving race, color, ethnicity, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

Students who believe they have been the victim of bullying or intimidating behavior by another student should report the incident immediately so it can be effectively investigated and resolved. Complaints can be submitted in writing or verbally to any school staff. All reports of bullying, harassment, or intimidating behavior will be investigated. The parents of both the alleged victim(s) and the accused student(s) will be notified of the results of investigation (subject to applicable confidentiality requirements).

If you want more information about Respect for All, e-mail RespectforAll@schools.nyc.gov or contact the Office of School and Youth Development, at 212-374-6834.