

January 22, 2010

Dear Ms Betz:

Thank you for your inquiry regarding Policy 704 *Health Support Services* and the *Handbook for Type 1 Diabetes Management in Schools* that is attached to the policy. The credit for this policy's success lies with school personnel and other support workers in our schools and districts, in collaboration with parents.

We are increasingly seeing medical conditions that impact on students during school hours. In response, Policy 704 was implemented in 1999 to define standards and procedures required for the provision of health support services to students while they are in school. The policy encompasses the full range of health supports required in the school system: administration of medication; routine supports (e.g., catheterization, special hygiene procedures); and emergency supports (e.g., intervention plan for epileptic seizure or the administration of an EpiPen).

Diabetes management is considered an essential routine service in Policy 704. Parents and school personnel are required to follow standards established in the policy. The handbook resulted from the lobbying efforts of concerned parents of children in the school system with diabetes. Officials from the Department of Health, both central and regional offices, the Canadian Diabetes Association, parents and parents groups worked together to provide input to the Department of Education that resulted in the handbook. Both the handbook and the policy can be found on the Department's website at <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/policies.asp> and <http://www.gnb.ca/0000/politiques.asp>. The handbook serves a dual purpose:

- To ensure students with type 1 diabetes are provided with a safe, positive and effective learning environment that is as normalized as possible.
- To ensure members of the school personnel have sufficient knowledge and skills concerning diabetes management to be comfortable in providing assistance to students with diabetes, in keeping with their duties.

The *Education Act* in New Brunswick requires that all school-aged children attend public school. School-aged children should not be denied the opportunity to receive this education because of certain medical conditions that require essential care during school hours. Therefore, it is incumbent upon to the Department of Education to ensure that strategies are in place that allow all school-aged children to participate fully in the public school system. Policy 704 ensures that the health support services required by children during school hours are met in a consistent and safe way so that these children may remain in school, wherever possible. The policy provides clear direction to parents and school personnel to ensure the rights and responsibilities of those involved are communicated consistently.

Feedback from parents of diabetic students has indicated that the policy and the handbook, in particular, have made a positive difference in the school life of their children. Just recently, a parent emailed to say that he felt this policy was one of the most progressive in the country, based on his own analysis. School administrators have indicated that the clarification of roles and responsibilities of not only school personnel, but parents as well, makes a huge impact.

This is not to say that there are not challenges in implementing such a policy. The ability of schools to provide training is sometimes an issue. Level I training may be provided by a nurse or pharmacist but we ask that Level II training be given by professional diabetes educators. This resource is finite and, when it comes time for scheduling this training, some districts must manage wait times and other scheduling issues. In addition, many of our schools are located in more rural areas of the province and as such, travel for these professionals is a consideration. We encourage school districts to work with their local Regional Health Authority to arrange for training in a timely manner.

In addition, some school personnel are not comfortable administering the care required by some students. This is a reasonable concern and one we treat with respect and sensitivity. School administrators and the student's parents work closely to ensure that individuals involved in executing the student's plan are capable of doing so and are comfortable with the administration of these duties. When challenges are identified, we work together to arrive at a resolution that meets the needs of all parties. No one is forced to administer care when they are not comfortable doing so. This is neither in the best interest of the child or school personnel.

This policy has resulted in many positive working relationships with parents, the Canadian Diabetes Association and the Asthma/Allergy Information Association, as well as other stakeholders. These relationships continue to benefit students and staff through the provision of consistent care in a safe and positive environment.

If you require any additional information about the development and implementation of Policy 704, you can contact me directly at christine.gilbertestabrooks@gnb.ca or (506) 453-3090. I wish you every success with your efforts in Ontario.

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