

GUIDELINES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH EPILEPSY OR A SEIZURE DISORDER AT SCHOOL



These guidelines were adapted, with permission, from Helen Padwick, Head Teacher, Crofton Infant School, in the United Kingdom by Project Access:
Improving Care for Children with Epilepsy.
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Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide guidelines that can be adapted by schools to ensure an optimal environment for students with epilepsy/seizure disorders. Recognizing that some students have special health care needs is essential to their academic and social progress. Students with epilepsy or a seizure disorder need to have a plan in place to address the child's special needs should a seizure occur while at school. When the school is unaware of a child's special health care needs they are not prepared as well as they could be. At the beginning of the school year, or when the child has been diagnosed with epilepsy, it is essential that open and consistent communication between parents, teachers, and school personnel takes place.

What is Epilepsy/Seizure Disorder?

The brain contains billions of nerve cells called neurons that communicate electronically, signaling to each other. A seizure occurs when there is a sudden and brief excess surge of electrical activity in the brain between neurons. This can cause abnormal movements, changes in behavior, and impaired or loss of consciousness. Seizures are not a mental health disorder. Having a single seizure does not mean



a child has epilepsy. A child has epilepsy when he or she has two or more seizures without a clear cause, such as fever, head injury, drug or alcohol use, or a virus. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that is still not completely understood. About three million Americans have epilepsy. Of the 200,000 new cases that develop each year, up to 50% are children and adolescents. About 300,000 children under the age of 14 in the United States have this condition. It develops in children of all ages and can affect them in different ways.

School Commitment Statement

The school welcomes all children with special health care needs. As required by state and federal laws, the school will provide the necessary supports and services to assure each child's special needs are met. The school recognizes that epilepsy is a medical condition that may require special assistance and/or accommodations and supports children with epilepsy in all aspects of school life, encouraging them to achieve their full potential. The intent of these guidelines is to ensure that all school personnel coming in contact with the child will receive training on epilepsy and seizure first aid, and, as allowed by school policies, will know when and how to administer emergency medicines. All new staff will also receive training, as needed.

Policy & Procedures

When a parent communicates to the school that their child has epilepsy or a seizure disorder, the Principal (or designated school personnel) will arrange a meeting with the parents (and student if appropriate). The meeting will identify how epilepsy may affect the student's academic, emotional, and social development. Any special arrangements the student may require will be also be made at this time. With parental and student permission, epilepsy will be addressed as a school issue through age appropriate presentations. In addition, the child's class will be introduced to epilepsy in a way they will understand, possibly through the use of age



appropriate story and factual books. This will ensure the child's classmates are not frightened if the child has a seizure in class, and will help reduce stigma experienced by the child with epilepsy.

Seizure Action Plan

A Seizure Action Plan (SAP) should be on file with the school nurse or principal (if no school nurse) for all identified students. The SAP will be drafted by the student's physician and signed by the school nurse and the student's parents. With input from the family, physician, and school nurse or principal, the SAP will be revised based on the emerging needs and/changes in his/her medical condition. The student's teacher will receive a copy of the SAP, a photo of the child, brief details of the child's condition and what to do if the student experiences a seizure. Each classroom the student visits will have a copy of the SAP.

Medicine

The SAP will identify any epilepsy medications or first aid required at school or in the event of an emergency. The SAP will identify the staff allowed by state/federal law who can administer epilepsy medications to the student. If the student requires emergency medicine, the SAP will also contain details of how and when to provide the medicine. The SAP will identify when emergency first responders should be contacted.

Educational Needs

The school recognizes that children with epilepsy may have special educational needs. If this is the case, the procedures for helping children with special needs will be carried out in accordance with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and state/federal laws.

Supportive School Environment

The school recognizes the importance of having a school environment that supports the needs of children with special health care needs. Any child with epilepsy will be able to rest in a quiet place away from other children if needed.

Field Trip & School Sponsored Activities Procedures

These guidelines apply while the child is within the school and participating in any outdoor activities organized by the school, including field trips. Any concerns held by the school staff, driver (bus or parent), parent, or student will be discussed by all parties involved prior to the activity or field trip. Included in the permission slip will be a SAP and a form signed by the parent, school and driver.

First Aid Plan

A First Aid plan for the student will be included in his/her SAP. All staff will receive basic training on providing seizure first aid. The procedure for giving basic first aid for seizures will also be displayed in the cafeteria and classrooms. Recognizing that only some seizures are an emergency, staff will be trained to differentiate between a seizure the school personnel can respond to, versus a seizure requiring a first responder (fire, ambulance). Guidelines for emergency care should be spelled-out in the SAP. The following scenarios are general guidelines of when a seizure is considered an emergency.

EMERGENCY

During any of these scenarios, 911 should be called:

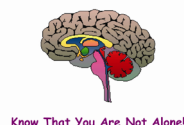
- If the student has diabetes, heat exhaustion, or is pregnant
- If an injury to the head or other body part happens during the seizure
- If the seizure lasts longer than five minutes
- If the student experiences one seizure following another without regaining consciousness
- If the student has breathing difficulties
- If the student has a seizure in water

For more information or to download additional copies of this guide, the Seizure Action Plan, or other resources about epilepsy and seizure disorders, please visit the Epilepsy Foundation of Northern California website:

www.epilepsynorcal.org



Wyoming Epilepsy Association



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