Managing children’s special health needs in child care

Using an early education and care service when your child has special health needs can be daunting. There are a range of health issues that children can experience including asthma, allergies and food intolerances in addition to illnesses such as epilepsy, cystic fibrosis and diabetes. It is important that services work with you to ensure your child is safely and respectfully cared for in the child care environment.

How can you support the service?
Providing clear and accurate information to your service is essential to ensure your child is kept healthy and safe. Support your service by:

- **Explain your child’s health needs:**
  - being open and honest about your child’s needs.
  - including details of any specific health requirements on the enrolment form
  - arranging a meeting with staff to discuss these requirements
  - coordinating with the educator, director and/or a health professional who will work directly with your child.

- **Providing contact details of your health professionals:**
  - allowing service staff to coordinate with other professionals to help develop consistent care strategies
  - providing any other information to help health care professionals tailor information specifically for the service’s setting.

- **Providing your service with your child’s health plan:**
  - this could be an asthma management plan or anaphylaxis action plan
  - providing updated plans as soon as they become available.

- **Demonstrating to service staff how to administer your child’s medications:**
  - this could include medications such as Ventolin® (or other medicated inhalants), insulin or an EpiPen® (adrenalin).

How can your service support you?
Services have a duty of care and responsibility to support and protect each child’s health and safety at all times. Your service can support you by:

- **Ensuring staff have specific training:**
  - this may be asthma management, managing anaphylaxis or emergency response training for conditions such as epilepsy or diabetes.

- **Ensuring staff know about your child’s individual health needs:**
  - this includes all staff and educators who are in regular contact with your child.

- **Abiding by regulations and requirements that support your child’s health:**
  - For centre-based services like preschools and long day care, there must be a staff member on duty with a current approved first aid certificate, anaphylaxis management training and emergency asthma management training. One staff member can hold all three qualifications or there can be a number of staff with the different qualifications.
  - In family day care, each staff member and assistant must hold all three qualifications.
Engaging in regular communication about your child’s care and experiences:
- seeking advice about your child’s health needs
- communicating through daily conversations and updates
- providing checklists or a diary to share information with you, other staff and/or other professionals working with your child
- offering help and access to new information or resources about your child’s health needs.

Developing clear procedures for managing children’s medical conditions:
- developing a policy for dealing with children’s medical conditions
- discussing policies and procedures with families
- discussing procedures and guidelines with staff to prevent your child being exposed to allergens and foods they are allergic to
- working closely with families to ensure strategies support and protect your child while being practical for the child care setting
- asking for your feedback to help improve their practices

It’s important that you do not feel intimidated or unsure about sharing information about your child’s health requirements. The information you provide about your child is confidential and will only be shared with staff who directly support your child’s health, safety and wellbeing.