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# Asthma at School

Maine Department of Health and Human Services

Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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# ASTHMA AT SCHOOL

## ASTHMA TRAINING

### Talking Points for School Staff

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#### TALKING POINTS and TEST QUESTIONS

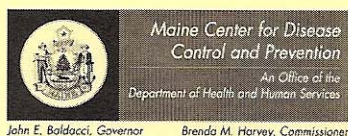
These are tools for use in training school staff. The TALKING POINTS are a guide for training and discussion. The TEST QUESTIONS (copy on the back) are suggested and can be used pre & post training. The results of the test can be used as a tool to guide, direct and supplement training.

#### TEST QUESTION ANSWER KEY

- |      |                |
|------|----------------|
| 1. F | 6. T           |
| 2. F | 7. T           |
| 3. T | 8. F           |
| 4. T | 9. T           |
| 5. F | 10. T, we hope |

This Asthma Training has been a collaboration of:

Maine Asthma Control and Prevention Program



The School Workgroup





## ASTHMA TRAINING: Talking Points for School Staff

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### 1. Asthma is a Major Health Problem in the U.S. and in Maine

- ☐ 5 million school-aged children have asthma.<sup>1</sup>
  - ☐ Students miss almost 13 million school days each year due to asthma.<sup>2</sup>
  - ☐ Asthma is the 3rd-ranking cause of hospitalization among children under 15.<sup>3</sup>
  - ☐ On average, 3 children in a classroom of 30 are likely to have asthma.<sup>4</sup>
  - ☐ 15% of Maine children have had asthma symptoms in their lifetime.<sup>5</sup>
  - ☐ 40% of Maine's kindergarten and third grader students with asthma do not have a written action plan (Asthma Action Plan.)<sup>6</sup>
  - ☐ Children on MaineCare have higher prevalence of asthma than those with other insurance.<sup>7</sup>
- 

### 2. How Can Asthma Impact Student Learning?

- ☐ Fatigue: students up at night with coughing, wheezing and other symptoms are overtired in the morning.
  - ☐ Absenteeism: students are out due to asthma episodes, health care appointments, and hospitalizations.
  - ☐ Missed class time: frequent visits to the school health office cause interruptions to scheduled lessons.
- 

### 3. What is Asthma?

Asthma is a condition that:

- |  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> is chronic                      | <input type="checkbox"/> produces recurring episodes of breathing problems | <input type="checkbox"/> is not contagious                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> is potentially life-threatening | <input type="checkbox"/> can occur at any age                              | <input type="checkbox"/> cannot be cured, but can be controlled |
- 

### 4. What are the Symptoms of Asthma?

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> shortness of breath | <input type="checkbox"/> tightness in the chest | <input type="checkbox"/> Waking at night with any of the listed symptoms* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wheezing            | <input type="checkbox"/> Coughing               |   |

*\* a key marker of uncontrolled asthma*

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### 5. Is There A Cure For Asthma?

- ☐ Asthma cannot be cured, but it can be controlled. Most young people with asthma should be able to live healthy, active lives with minimal symptoms.
- 

### 6. What Can Make Asthma Worse?

- ☐ Not all factors affect all people. It's important to identify what affects a particular student's asthma.

#### ALLERGENS such as:

- ☐ furred and feathered animals
- ☐ dust mites
- ☐ cockroaches
- ☐ pollens from grass and trees
- ☐ molds (indoors and outdoors)

#### IRRITANTS such as:

- ☐ exposure to tobacco smoke
- ☐ scented products
- ☐ strong fumes or odors
- ☐ outdoor air pollution

#### OTHER things, such as:

- ☐ infections such as colds, flu, sinusitis
- ☐ cold air
- ☐ some medications
- ☐ obesity
- ☐ stress/depression
- ☐ other conditions such as GERD



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### **7. What Happens During an Episode of Asthma?**

- ☐ The lining of the airways become narrow and easily irritated due to inflammation.
  - ☐ The airways produce a thick mucus.
  - ☐ The muscles around the airways tighten and make airways narrower.
- 

### **8. How to Handle an Asthma Episode**

- ☐ 1. Quickly evaluate the situation. Encourage the student to use his/her rescue inhaler if available.
  - ☐ 2. If rescue inhaler is not available, bring the student to the school nurse.
  - ☐ 3. If severe and child is not recovering, call 911, then call parent/guardian.
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### **9. How Is Asthma Controlled?**

- ☐ Follow an individualized, written asthma action plan.
  - ☐ Reduce or eliminate exposure to things that can cause asthma symptoms.
  - ☐ Encourage and support use of medication as prescribed.
    - Quick-relief medicine for all students with asthma.
    - Long-term control medicine for students with persistent asthma.
  - ☐ Monitor response to treatment and level of asthma control.
  - ☐ Encourage regular follow-up care.
  - ☐ Ensure good communication among school, the student's doctor, and home.
- 

### **10. Physical Education and Activity**

- ☐ Encourage full participation when student is well.
  - ☐ Allow pre-treatment and/or warm-up before physical activity.
  - ☐ Ensure student access to quick-relief medication during activity.
  - ☐ Provide modified activities as needed.
- 

### **11. What Should Most People with Asthma Be Able To Do?**

- ☐ Be active without having asthma symptoms; this includes participating in physical activity and sports.
- ☐ Sleep through the night without having asthma symptoms.
- ☐ Know how to prevent asthma episodes.
- ☐ Have the best possible lung function (e.g., good peak flow number.)

**Schools, families, and the community can work together  
to help students better manage their asthma.**

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#### **ENDNOTES:**

1. Epidemiology and Statistics Unit. *Trends in Asthma Morbidity and Mortality*. NYC: ALA, July 2006.
2. CDC. *Asthma Prevalence, Health Care Use and Mortality, 2003-2005*. National Center for Health Statistics. Washington, DC.
3. Hall MJ & DeFrances CJ. *2001 National Hospital Discharge Survey*. Advance data from Vital and Health Statistics, Table 3; no 332. Hyattsville, MD: NCHS, 2003.
4. Epidemiology and Statistics Unit. *Trends in Asthma Morbidity and Mortality*. NYC: ALA, July 2006.
5. *2003 National Survey of Children's Health*
6. *2004 Maine Child Health Survey*
7. *2008 the Burden of Asthma in Maine*



## ASTHMA TRAINING: Talking Points for School Staff

### TEST QUESTIONS

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- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| 1. Asthma is a disease that can be cured.  | T | F |
| 2. Asthma triggers are the same for all people with asthma.  | T | F |
| 3. Uncontrolled asthma can impact student learning.  | T | F |
| 4. Coughing can be a symptom of asthma.  | T | F |
| 5. Students with asthma miss just as much school as other students.                                    | T | F |
| 6. It is important to know what each student's triggers are.   | T | F |
| 7. Students with asthma should be physically active.   | T | F |
| 8. Students with asthma should take their controller medication at the first sign of an asthma attack. | T | F |
| 9. When their asthma is controlled, students with asthma can participate in school activities.         | T | F |
| 10. If a student with asthma has an episode, I know what to do.  | T | F |



John E. Baldacci, Governor

Department of Health  
and Human Services

Maine People Living  
Safe, Healthy and Productive Lives

Brenda M. Harvey, Commissioner

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