

Managing Diabetes in Schools Policy

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1. Policy Statement

It is important that students with diabetes receive necessary health care support services to enable them to attend school. Some students may require insulin during instructional school hours. This is a shared responsibility among school administration, staff, students, and parents/guardians that is supported by health care professionals (HCP)¹ and School Health Partnership (SHP) nurses².

This policy provides guidance to ensure students with diabetes are supported in managing diabetes health care tasks while at school.

2. Definitions

diabetes mellitus: Diabetes mellitus (diabetes) is a chronic metabolic disease characterized by elevated levels of blood glucose (blood sugar) which over time can lead to serious damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys, and nerves. Type 1 diabetes occurs due to the body's failure to produce insulin. Insulin is needed to be able to use the energy from food as fuel for the body. Type 2 diabetes occurs when the body doesn't respond well to insulin and the pancreas cannot produce enough to compensate.

diabetes management: Effective diabetes management, regardless of the technology used, is dependent on the decisions made by the student and their parents/guardians, around monitoring blood sugar, food intake, activity, stress, and insulin administration.

hypoglycemia: Hypoglycemia is a condition where the blood glucose level is lower than normal (<4 mmol/L or 5 mmol/L with symptoms). Immediate treatment is required as low levels of glucose can quickly lead to a medical emergency.

hyperglycemia: Hyperglycemia is a condition where the blood glucose level is higher than normal. This can be because the body lacks enough insulin. Initial symptoms are usually excessive thirst and frequent urination. High blood glucose may not always require immediate attention, but can cause problems over time which, if untreated, can become life threatening.

insulin administration: Insulin may be administered by insulin pump or insulin pen. All students with type 1, and some with type 2, diabetes need insulin to manage their diabetes. Insulin administered through an insulin pump or insulin pen has the same effect and risks associated with low blood glucose.

- 1 A health care professional is a regulated health care professional that includes, but is not limited to, NSH/IWK diabetes educator (dietitian, registered nurse), primary care provider (nurse practitioner, family physician), and specialist (paediatrician, endocrinologist).
- 2 A School Health Partnership nurse works directly with school administrators, teachers, school staff, students, parents/guardians, and other HCP to establish and maintain plans of care for students to support students with complex medical needs while at school.

Plan of Care: Diabetes: The Plan of Care (PoC): Diabetes outlines the necessary procedures to manage high blood glucose readings, the procedures required if low blood glucose occurs, and the emergency procedure in the event of severe hypoglycemic, e.g., administration of intranasal glucagon. The PoC: Diabetes identifies the staff required to support the student with specific diabetes health care tasks, including the administration of midday insulin. PoCs are stored in TIENET.

The Student Planning Team (as defined in the [Inclusive Education Policy](#)) will collaborate to develop the PoC: Diabetes, which is individualized for each student with diabetes and provides a usable guide for school staff.

3. Policy Objective

The objective of this policy is to support the health and safety of students with diabetes while at school, including the promotion of a student's independence and capacity for self-management of their diabetes.

This policy recognizes that the management of diabetes will continue to change with advancements in pharmacology and technological supports. The administrative procedures, documents, and guidelines associated with this policy will be updated as necessary in response to these changes.

4. Guiding Principles

This policy is built on the following guiding principles:

- 4.1 The safety and achievement of students and supporting their wellness so they can best learn and succeed should be the first and foremost consideration.
- 4.2 Practice related to the care of students with diabetes in Nova Scotia was developed in alignment with guidance from Diabetes Canada.
- 4.3 The PoC will be developed, and implemented, in collaboration with the student, the Student Planning Team, and supporting HCPs.

5. Application

This policy applies to all Regional Centres of Education (RCEs), the Conseil scolaire acadien provincial (CSAP), and all Nova Scotia public schools.

6. Policy Directives

The directives outlined in the policy replace directives in existing policies covering the same issue.

- 6.1 All students with diabetes should have a current PoC, which is reviewed annually at a minimum.
- 6.2 Teacher assistants (TAs) can be assigned to perform health care tasks related to diabetes management, including midday insulin administration. Any TA assigned to perform a health care task will be trained.
- 6.3 All students diagnosed with diabetes must have access to intranasal glucagon during the school day. School staff will know of its location.

6.4 All school staff working in schools where there are students with diabetes will receive annual orientation in diabetes and diabetes management.

6.5 Only appropriately trained school staff will perform specific diabetes health care tasks.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

- communicate the policy and associated administrative procedures and guidelines to the RCEs, CSAP, and associated health care partners
- ensure that RCE and CSAP staff understand their roles and responsibilities relating to the policy

Regional Centres for Education and Conseil scolaire acadien provincial

- communicate the policy and associated administrative procedures and guidelines to school administrators and staff
- ensure the availability of training resources and supplies, including the PPE required, to fulfill the directives within the policy

School Health Partnership Nurses

- assist with the development, approval, and implementation of the PoC, engaging with the student, their parents/guardians, HCPs, and assigned school staff as appropriate
- act as the liaison between the school, diabetes centre/paediatrician/primary care provider, and parents/guardians when revisions to the PoC are required
- communicate, coordinate, and provide the specific education for school staff who will be caring for students with diabetes requiring insulin

School Administrators (In Schools Where There are Students Diagnosed with Diabetes)

- maintain a caring, positive, and flexible school environment that develops independence for students with diabetes, while ensuring a supportive presence within which health care needs are met in accordance with the *Inclusive Education Policy*
- facilitate the development of a PoC by the Student Planning Team when students are newly diagnosed or new to a school
- ensure, monitor, and document that all school staff complete the annual orientation in diabetes and diabetes management
- ensure, monitor, and document that the TAs assigned to support health care tasks attend specific training
- support students to have access to their glucose monitoring technology at all times and ensure compliance with the *Personal Health Information Act (PHIA)*

School Administrators (All Schools)

- ensure that a student's supply of intranasal glucagon is available and easily accessible in case of a severe hypoglycemia emergency and that its location has been communicated with school staff

- in schools where there are no students diagnosed with diabetes, strongly encourage all staff to complete annual orientation in diabetes and diabetes management

Teacher Assistants (Assigned to Perform Health Care Tasks Related to Diabetes Management)

- participate in specific education and training with the School Health Partnership nurse on health care tasks related to diabetes management, including insulin administration
- support students to manage their diabetes and perform health care tasks per their PoC

School Staff

- are aware of the location of a student's supply of intranasal glucagon and how to access it in case of a severe hypoglycemia emergency
- in schools where there are students diagnosed with diabetes, complete annual orientation in diabetes and diabetes management

Students with Diabetes and their Parents/Guardians

- notify the school administrator on receiving a diagnosis of diabetes and/or changes that may require a revision to the student's PoC
- participate with the Student Planning Team to develop the PoC
- as part of the PoC, ensure students have the required resources to support their diabetes management while at school

8. Monitoring

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (EECD) staff will be responsible for monitoring this policy annually. As part of the annual review, EECD staff will recommend amendments to the policy, as needed.

9. References

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10. Special Thanks

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- Parents and Guardians
- Nova Scotia College of Nursing
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- Nova Scotia Health (NSH)
- Nova Scotia Teachers Union (NSTU)
- Paediatricians: IWK & NSH
- Principals and Teachers
- Public Schools Administrators Association of Nova Scotia (PSAANS)
- School Health Partnership Nurses
- Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
- Student Services Coordinators