

Protecting Children with Food Allergies Act

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Background: Over the past two decades, the number of children with food allergies in the United States has more than doubled. In 1999, three percent of children had food allergies. Now, eight percent of children—almost six million children in total (or about two students per classroom)—have food allergies.

Because the most common allergens (e.g. milk, eggs, fish, shellfish, tree nuts, wheat, peanuts, soybeans, and sesame) are often present in school meals, many children with food allergies have an allergic reaction while at school. In fact, more than 15 percent of children with food allergies (almost one million children in total) have an allergic reaction while at school, according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Children who have not been previously diagnosed with a food allergy make up 25 percent of these reactions.

Issue: School food personnel must understand how to best protect children with food allergies. Some states and school districts have implemented policies to help reduce food-related allergic reactions in schools, such as required staff trainings. However, too few have implemented these policies, which has left children with food allergies vulnerable to potential, life-threatening allergic reactions.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) makes food allergy trainings available to National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) personnel, but it is not a requirement. Further, these trainings are not available to personnel under the Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

Solution: In order to protect children with food allergies, school food personnel must be trained to prevent, identify, and respond to food-related allergic reactions. The *Protecting Children with Food Allergies Act* would:

1. Require National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) personnel to complete a food allergy training;
2. Require FNS to make available food allergy trainings to personnel under the Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP); and
3. Require FNS to create and incorporate food allergy information into its nutrition education materials for participants under the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

The *Protecting Children with Food Allergies Act* would amend Section 7(g)(2) of the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C. 1776(g)(2)), which has enabled FNS to partner with the Institute of Child Nutrition (located at the University of Mississippi) to provide existing federally-mandated trainings to NSLP and SBP personnel.

Endorsements: The *Protecting Children with Food Allergies Act* has the endorsements of the Food Allergy Research & Education (FARE), American Academy of Allergy Asthma & Immunology (AAAAI), American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA), American College of Allergy, Asthma, and Immunology (ACAAI), and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN).