

## Type 1 Diabetes in Ontario Schools How you can advocate for improved student support

**BACKGROUND:** On October 24, 2017, the Ontario Ministry of Education released Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) No. 161, [\*Supporting Children and Students with Prevalent Medical Conditions \(Anaphylaxis, Asthma, Diabetes and/or Epilepsy\) in Schools.\*](#)

These tips will help parents advocate for improved in-school support for students with type 1 diabetes in their own communities.

### **What does PPM 161 mean for students with type 1 diabetes?**

A PPM is a policy directive issued by the Ministry of Education to district school boards and school authorities. It is not the same as legislation.

PPM 161 requires school boards to develop policies to support students with asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and those at risk of anaphylaxis. It describes what should be included in the policies.

### **When does the policy come into effect?**

School boards are expected to have their policies on prevalent medical conditions implemented by September 2018.

### **What will school board policies on prevalent medical conditions cover?**

Among other things, school board policies are expected to detail:

- The roles and responsibilities of parents, school staff, principal, students, and school boards;
- How training and education for school staff will be carried out;
- What a student's plan of care should include;
- How daily management of the student's condition will be supported;
- How emergencies will be handled.

### **What does this mean for students with type 1 diabetes?**

Because the PPM does not distinguish between medical conditions, school boards will not be required to have a diabetes-specific policy. However, once the school board policies are in place, all students with a medical condition will be required to have a care plan, which would specify the child's individual needs.

### **Does this mean all students are ensured support?**

In its current form, PPM 161 does not require schools to designate individuals to provide hands-on support with the day-to-day management of their diabetes. Instead, the PPM asks principals to "encourage" volunteers.

## What if a school board already has a policy on diabetes in school?

School boards with policies will need to review them and ensure they meet or exceed the criteria described in PPM 161.

## What can I do?

The PPM advises school boards to seek input from a wide range of people when developing or updating their policies.

As the parent of a student with type 1 diabetes, your experience and insight is valuable to the policy development process. Here is what you can do to help shape a diabetes-in-school policy in your local school board(s):

- First, find out whether your school board already has a policy on diabetes in school. Check the board's website. If you can't find it there, call.
- If a policy already exists, read it carefully to see how well it meets the requirements in PPM 161. If there is no policy, the board will be starting from scratch.
- If you know other parents of children with type 1 diabetes in your area, talk to them about their experiences. You may find it easier to approach your board as a group.
- Ask your diabetes clinic whether they have been involved with any of the local school boards.
- Contact your school board's Director of Education. Offer to be involved in the development or review/assessment of the board's policy.
- Encourage your board to develop a diabetes-specific policy that makes clear how schools are expected to support students.
- Ask whether you can do a 10-minute presentation to the board or senior leaders on diabetes—what it means for the school day, what students need to be safe, what information staff need.
- Follow up with your school board contacts as policy development progresses.

## Are there resources available to help?

A list of Ontario school boards is here: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/sbinfo/boardList.html>

The Ministry of Education is developing tools to help school boards develop their policies, and resources to help train staff. Visit these links for more information:

- Ontario Education Services Corporation: <http://www.oesc-cseo.org/en-ca/Pages/Prevalent-Medical-Conditions.aspx>
- Medical Conditions, fact sheets: <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/healthyschools/medicalconditions.html>

**Support Ontario Students with Type 1 Diabetes (SOS-T1D)** is a parent-led group. Connect with them on Twitter (@SOST1D), Facebook ([www.facebook.com/groups/SOST1D/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/SOST1D/)) or visit [www.sosdiabetes.ca](http://www.sosdiabetes.ca).

**Diabetes@School** ([www.diabetesatschool.ca](http://www.diabetesatschool.ca)): This site—developed by the Canadian Paediatric Society, Canadian Pediatric Endocrine Group and Diabetes Canada—is recommended by the Ministry for training purposes. You'll also find a range of print and video resources to help education school staff on all aspects of diabetes at school including an individual care plan for diabetes.

