

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS AND PHARMACIES ON SUPPLYING EMERGENCY EPINEPHRINE AUTO-INJECTORS TO NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC AND CHARTER SCHOOLS

1. Does North Carolina law now require schools to have emergency epinephrine auto-injectors on hand?

Yes. A provision of the 2014 budget bill requires all North Carolina public schools and charter schools to have “in a secure but unlocked and easily accessible location a minimum of two epinephrine auto-injectors.”

2. When did this law become effective?

November 1, 2014. Please note that the law did not specify that schools must have two epinephrine auto-injectors on hand “on” November 1, 2014. Rather, this is the date on which the acquisition of epinephrine auto-injectors by schools became authorized.

3. Why is this required?

So that schools can “provide emergency medical aid to persons suffering from an anaphylactic reaction during the school day and at school-sponsored events on school property.”

4. Who is responsible for obtaining epinephrine auto-injectors for the school?

Each school’s principal “shall designate one or more school personnel, as part of the medical care program under G.S. 115C-373.1, to receive initial training and annual retraining from a school nurse or qualified representative of the health department regarding the storage and emergency use of an epinephrine auto-injector.” The school nurse or other designated school personnel so trained are responsible for obtaining the auto-injectors for their individual school.

5. How does the school nurse or other designated school personnel get a “prescription” for an epinephrine auto-injector?

The appropriate school personnel “shall obtain a non-patient specific prescription for epinephrine auto-injectors from a physician, physician assistant, or nurse practitioner of the local health department serving the area in which the local school administrative unit is located.”

A list of local health departments in North Carolina is found here:
<http://www.ncalhd.org/county.htm>

6. If the prescription is “non-patient specific”, whose name should be on it?

The law does not specify a specific name to be placed on the prescription. The statute does, however, state that the specifically designated school nurse or other trained personnel are responsible for obtaining the prescription for an individual school. Accordingly, consistent with general requirements of the North Carolina Pharmacy Practice Act, it would be appropriate to have either: (a) the individual school’s name; or (b) the designated school nurse or other trained person’s name on the prescription; or (c) both.

Moreover, and also as required by the North Carolina Pharmacy Practice Act, the epinephrine auto injectors must be appropriately labeled when dispensed to the designated school personnel. Therefore, the label must likewise contain either the individual school’s name or the designated school nurse or other trained person’s name, or both (for example, “Joe Smith on behalf of Springfield Elementary School.”) Again, as required by the North Carolina Pharmacy Practice Act for dispensing any prescription drug, all appropriate information must be included by the dispensing pharmacy on the labeling. See http://www.ncbop.org/faqs/Pharmacist/faq_PrescriptionLabelling.htm for general information on labeling.

7. Where can the school nurse or other designated school personnel get the epinephrine auto-injector prescription filled?

There are at least three options available:

(a) Any North Carolina-licensed pharmacy can immediately receive prescriptions for, and dispense, epinephrine auto-injectors to school personnel under this statute.

(b) One manufacturer of epinephrine auto-injectors, BioRidge Pharma, has a program available through which schools may obtain EpiPen® auto-injectors without cost. BioRidge Pharma works with pharmacies to obtain the auto-injectors and provide them directly to schools. More information on this program is found here: <http://epipen4schools.com/> Please note that personnel from BioRidge Pharma have indicated to Board staff that they work with participating pharmacies to ensure appropriate dispensing and labeling. As noted above in Question #6, epinephrine auto-injectors are prescription drugs and must be dispensed and labeled in compliance with the overall requirements of the North Carolina Pharmacy Practice Act.

(c) As of January 1, 2015, a Board rule amendment will become effective that allows registered nurses at local health departments to dispense epinephrine auto-injectors prescribed in compliance with the new statute.

8. Which epinephrine auto-injector should a school get?

The statute does not specify a particular “brand” of epinephrine auto-injector. There are several versions of epinephrine auto-injectors on the market. More information is found here:

http://www.ncbop.org/faqs/Pharmacist/faq_Epinephrine.htm

It is critically important that schools and pharmacies ensure that the designated school personnel are trained to use the **specific** epinephrine auto-injector that is prescribed and dispensed. Different auto-injectors have different operational

instructions. When an auto-injector is needed, seconds matter. The Board of Pharmacy reiterated this crucial point in its January 2014 newsletter, which is found here: <http://www.ncbop.org/Newsletters/Jan2014.pdf>

9. The statute says that the Board of Pharmacy must adopt rules “addressing the authorization for school personnel to obtain a prescription for epinephrine for emergency health circumstances.” Does this mean schools cannot obtain these prescriptions or have them dispensed until rules are made?

No. The statute became effective on November 1, 2014. Designated school personnel may obtain the non-patient prescriptions at their local health department and any North Carolina licensed pharmacy may dispense the auto-injectors to designated school personnel. Registered nurses at local health departments will not be able to dispense epinephrine auto-injectors until the Board’s rulemaking is complete. But the other options specified in Question #7 above are immediately available.

12/14