

# Asthma Policy

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## 1. Policy statement

### Values

This centre is committed to:

- Raising awareness about asthma among the committee/board, staff, parents/guardians of children attending the centre, and any other person(s) dealing with children at the centre
- Providing a safe and healthy environment for all children enrolled at the centre
- Providing an environment in which all children with asthma can participate in order to realise their full potential
- Providing a clear set of guidelines and expectations to be followed with regard to the management of asthma.

### Purpose

The aim of this policy is:

- For all children with asthma enrolled at the centre to receive appropriate attention as required.
- To respond to the needs of children who have not been diagnosed with asthma and who have an asthma attack at the centre.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to children enrolled at the centre, their parents/guardians, the staff and committee/board.

## 3. Background and legislation

Asthma is a chronic health condition affecting approximately 15% of children. It is one of the most common reasons for childhood admission to hospital. While an average of two people die in Victoria each week from asthma, many of these deaths are thought to be preventable. Community education and correct management will assist in minimising the impact of asthma.

It is generally accepted that children under the age of six do not have the skills and ability to recognise and manage their own asthma effectively. With this in mind, the centre recognises the need to educate the staff and parents/guardians about asthma and to promote responsible asthma management strategies.

Legislation

- *Children's Services Act 1996*
- *Children's Services Regulations 2009*
- *Health Act 1958*
- *Health Records Act 2001(Vic)*
- *Information Privacy Act 2000(Vic)*
- *Occupational Health & Safety Act 2004*
- *Privacy Act 1988*

## 4. Definitions

- **Metered dose inhaler (puffer):** Common delivery device used to administer reliever medication.

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- **Emergency Asthma Management (EAM) Accreditation:** Successful completion of a Course in EAM.
- **Asthma emergency:** The onset of unstable or deteriorating asthma symptoms requiring immediate treatment with reliever medication.
- **Asthma action plan:** A record of information on the child's asthma and how to manage it, including contact details, what to do when the child's asthma worsens and emergency treatment.
- **Asthma triggers:** Things that may induce asthma symptoms, for example, pollens, colds/viruses, dust mites, smoke, exercise. Asthma triggers will vary from child to child.
- **Bronchodilator Accreditation Number (BAN):** This can only be acquired after successfully completing an EAM course. This number, belonging to an individual staff member, allows the centre to purchase, hold and administer a blue reliever puffer for first aid purposes.
- **Puffer:** Common name for a metered dose inhaler.
- **Reliever medication:** This comes in a blue container and is used to relax the muscles around the airways to relieve asthma symptoms, for example, Airomir, Asmol, Epaq or Ventolin.
- **Spacer device:** A plastic device used to increase the efficiency of delivery of asthma medication from a puffer. It may be used in conjunction with a facemask.

## 5. Procedures

### The committee/board are responsible for:

- Where appropriate, organising EAM training for staff.
- Where appropriate, organising asthma management information sessions for parents/guardians of children enrolled at the centre.
- Encouraging open communication between parents/guardians and staff regarding the status and impact of a child's asthma.
- Providing funding for the staff to purchase asthma reliever medication and a spacer device for the First Aid Kit, as required.
- Approving any alterations or changes to this policy.

### The staff are responsible for:

- Implementing this policy on a daily basis and undertaking EAM training if directed by the committee/board.
- Asking all parents/guardians as part of the enrolment procedure, prior to their child's attendance at the centre, whether the child has diagnosed asthma and document this information on the child's enrolment record.
- Providing families whose child has asthma with an asthma action plan to complete in consultation with their doctor. On completion, this will be attached to the child's enrolment record.
- Compiling a list of children with asthma and placing it in a secure but readily accessible location, which is known to all staff. Relievers will be informed of the list and the location of the asthma action plans.
- Displaying the Asthma Foundation of Victoria's Asthma First Aid posters in key locations at the centre, for example, in the children's room, bathroom and kitchen.

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- Regularly maintaining all asthma components of the First Aid Kit, to ensure all medications are current and any asthma devices are clean and ready for use.
- Ensuring that asthma components included in the First Aid Kit are taken on any activities outside the centre.
- Consulting with the parents/guardians of children with asthma, in relation to the health and safety of their child and the supervised management of the child's asthma.
- Identifying, and where possible, minimising asthma triggers as defined in the definition section of the policy or in children's asthma action plans.
- Promptly communicating any concerns to parents/guardians if it is considered that a child's asthma is limiting his/her ability to participate fully in all activities.
- Modifying activities, where necessary, for the child with asthma in accordance with their current needs and abilities.
- Administering all regular prescribed asthma medication in accordance with the medication book.
- Discussing with the parents/guardians the requirements of the medication book and what is needed for their child.

## **The parents/guardians are responsible for:**

- Informing staff, either on enrolment or on initial diagnosis, that their child has a history of asthma.
- Providing all relevant information regarding the child's asthma via the asthma action plan.
- Notifying the staff, in writing, of any changes to the information they entered on the asthma action plan during the year, if this occurs.
- Providing an adequate supply of appropriate asthma medication and equipment for their child at all times, for example, blue reliever medication and spacer.
- Entering the required information in the centre's Medication Book at the beginning of each term or when necessary.
- Communicating all relevant information and concerns to staff as the need arises, for example, if asthma symptoms were present the previous night.
- Consulting with the staff, in relation to the health and safety of their child and the supervised management of the child's asthma.

## **Plan of action for a child with diagnosed asthma**

The staff, together with the parents/guardians of a child with asthma, will discuss and agree on a plan of action for the emergency management of an asthma attack based on the 4 Step Asthma First Aid Plan. This plan will be included as part of, or attached to, the child's asthma action plan and enrolment record.

This plan should include action to be taken where the parents/guardians have provided asthma medication, and in situations where this medication may not be available.

As part of developing a particular plan of action, it may be appropriate to consider staff receiving EAM training. The Asthma Foundation of Victoria is advocating that centres have their staff accredited in EAM.

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## **Action to be taken if a child suddenly collapses or has difficulty breathing with a possible asthma attack**

**Children with a known asthma condition:** Staff will follow the agreed plan of action for the child for the emergency treatment of an asthma attack as detailed in the asthma action plan. If the child's asthma action plan is NOT available, staff should immediately commence the standard asthma emergency protocol detailed below:

- Step 1: Sit the child upright and remain calm to reassure them
- Step 2: Without delay shake a blue reliever puffer (inhaler) and give four separate puffs through a spacer. Use one puff at a time and ask the child to take four breaths from the spacer after each puff
- Step 3: Wait four minutes. If there is no improvement repeat Step 2
- Step 4: If still no improvement after a further four minutes - call an ambulance immediately (dial 000) and state clearly that the child is "having an asthma attack"

Continuously repeat Steps 2 and 3 whilst waiting for the ambulance.

- In an emergency the blue reliever puffer used may be the child's own, from the First Aid Kit or borrowed from another child. Only staff who have completed a course in EAM may access the blue reliever puffer for first aid purposes from the First Aid Kit.

## **Children who staff are not aware have pre existing asthma**

In this situation, staff will:

- Step 5: Call an ambulance immediately (dial 000) and state that the child is having breathing difficulty
- Step 6: Administer four separate puffs of a blue reliever puffer via a spacer. Use one puff at a time and ask the child to take four breaths from the spacer after each puff
- Step 7: Keep giving four separate puffs of a blue reliever puffer every four minutes until the ambulance arrives.

This treatment could be life saving for a child whose asthma has not been previously recognised and it will not be harmful if the collapse or breathing difficulty was not due to asthma. Reliever medication is extremely safe, even if the child does not have asthma.

## **Cleaning of devices**

Devices (puffers and spacers) from the First Aid Kit must be thoroughly cleaned after each use to prevent cross infection. In most cases a child will use his/her own puffer and spacer. Devices can be easily cleaned by following these steps (NHMRC Infection Control Guidelines 2003):

- Step 1: Ensure the canister is removed from the puffer container (the canister must not be submerged) and the spacer is separated into two parts
- Step 2: Wash devices thoroughly in hot water and kitchen detergent
- Step 3: Do not rinse
- Step 4: Allow devices to 'air dry'. Do not rub dry
- Step 5: When dry, wipe with a 70% alcohol swab (for example, medi-swab available from pharmacies), paying particular attention to the inside and outside of the mouthpiece of the devices

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Step 6: When completely dry, ensure the canister is replaced into the puffer container and check the device is working correctly by firing one or two 'puffs' into the air. A mist should be visible upon firing.

If any device is contaminated by blood, dispose of it safely and replace the device.

## 6. Related documents

### Centre policies

- Accident, Injury and Medical Emergency
- Administration of Medication
- Anaphylaxis
- Illness
- Privacy

### Telephone numbers

The Asthma Foundation of Victoria on (03) 9326 7088 or 1800 645 130.

### Training

Training of staff in EAM will be provided where this is considered necessary.

## 7. Authorisation

This policy was adopted by the Parkdale Preschool committee, at the committee/board meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

## 8. Review date

This policy shall be reviewed in 2010.

## 9. Evaluation

In order to assess whether the policy has achieved the values and purposes the committee/board will:

- Obtain feedback from the staff regarding the effectiveness of the policy.
- Assess whether any issues/concerns raised in relation to children with asthma, or the policy, were resolved.
- If appropriate, conduct annual surveys of parents/guardians of children with identified asthma, to gauge their satisfaction with the asthma policy in relation to their child, or include an extra section in the annual general survey.

In situations where the committee/board is considering making changes to the policy it is recommended that they consult with relevant bodies or organisations such as The Asthma Foundation of Victoria.

The Asthma Foundation of Victoria plays a major role in the provision of training, advice and resources for centres in relation to asthma. The Asthma Foundation of Victoria can be contacted on (03) 9326 7088 or 1800 645 130 (toll free), via email at [advice@asthma.org.au](mailto:advice@asthma.org.au) or on the web at [www.asthma.org.au](http://www.asthma.org.au)

**Written by The Asthma Foundation of Victoria and Kindergarten Parents Victoria**