

**Asthma Action Plans:**  
**The Missing Link between Your Asthmatic Patients and Their Access to Emergency Bronchodilators**

Asthma Action Plans are a familiar concept as part of comprehensive asthma management, and are part of the National Institute of Health's [Expert Panel Report 3 Guidelines for the Diagnosis and Management of Asthma](#). In the midst of preparing patients' back to school forms or providing a new asthma diagnosis, it is easy for this document to get lost in the shuffle.

In the past, not having an Asthma Action Plan filled out and sent back to the school might not have had a direct detrimental effect. However, in New Hampshire the difference between an asthmatic patient with a current Asthma Action Plan on file and one without is now the difference between a patient who can access emergency medication at school and one who cannot.

In 2016, [RSA 200:54-57](#) (Bronchodilators, Spacers, and Nebulizers in Schools) was passed by the NH State Legislature. Prior to this passage, students with asthma could self-carry their inhaler at school if they had a prescription on file with the school nurse. However, if they forgot their inhaler and had an asthma attack, the school nurse was not authorized to provide them with a bronchodilator. This meant that many students were being taken by ambulance to the hospital – a practice that incurs high cost, causes the student to miss valuable classroom time, diverts the school nurse's attention from other students in need, and delays access to rescue medication, putting students at risk.

RSA 200:53-57 allows the following measures to be taken: 1) a school board to approve the obtainment and storage of emergency bronchodilator medication at the school 2) A licensed physician to prescribe a stock amount of medication for the school district 3) a licensed pharmacist to fill a prescription for stock medication 4) the school nurse or other school personnel, after receiving a New Hampshire School Nurse Association training, to administer emergency medication during an asthma attack to students *with a current (annually updated) Asthma Action Plan and parental permission on file.*

The New Hampshire Asthma Control Program, as part of the New Hampshire Asthma Collaborative, has designed an Asthma Action Plan with ease of use in mind. This Asthma Action Plan, available free of charge, is a triplicate form (one copy for your office, for the family, and for the school) that has a signature for yourself, the school nurse, and the parent. In addition to an Asthma Action Plan, this document serves as physician's orders that can be acted upon, as well as a release of information between your office and the school. This form was designed with consultation from the New Hampshire School Nurse Association, the American Lung Association in Maine and New Hampshire, and other clinical professionals. To request hard copies of Asthma Action Plans, please email [anna.carrigan@dhhs.nh.gov](mailto:anna.carrigan@dhhs.nh.gov). To access a printable version, click [here](#). The Asthma Control Program is also piloting a low-literacy Asthma Action Plan that will eventually be available for wide-spread use.

The New Hampshire Asthma Control Program has been working to educate schools and parents about the importance, and potentially life-saving impact, of Asthma Action Plans. With New Hampshire's legislative changes, the role that Asthma Action Plans play in supporting asthmatic students is even greater, and we appreciate the partnership of physicians in this effort. In New Hampshire, Asthma Action Plans are no longer just a supplemental document, and truly can give patients better access to care.

For more information about asthma visit: [dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdpc/asthma](http://dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdpc/asthma)