

Supporting Youth with Chronic Conditions in Out-of-School Time Programs

This guide and resource list provides strategies to support your work—from creating safe environments, to planning for preparedness, and communicating with key partners.

Let's Explore! 

Collaborative for
**Advancing Healthy Experiences
in Out-of-School Time**

How to Navigate this Interactive Guide

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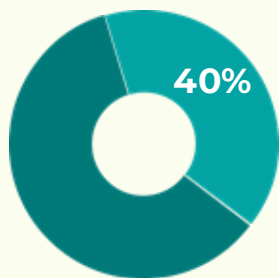


What is a chronic disease?

Chronic diseases are defined broadly as conditions that last 1 year or more and require ongoing medical attention or limit activities of daily living or both.

Chronic conditions include

- ✓ Asthma
- ✓ Diabetes
- ✓ Seizure disorders
- ✓ Allergies



Over **40%** of U.S. school-aged children and adolescents have at least one chronic health condition.

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)



Over 7 million youth are enrolled in out-of-school-time (OST) programs, an estimated **3 million may have a chronic health condition.**

The magnitude of this number represents the challenge for OST programs in ensuring safety through daily management and addressing potential emergencies. It also provides an **opportunity** to build meaningful relationships between OST programs, schools, and medical providers, and help youth develop skills and habits for lifelong health.



OST programs play an important role in promoting youth health, safety, and belonging. Explore strategies for creating safe, supportive environments where all young people, including those with chronic conditions, can thrive.

Strategies for:

Creating Safe and Healthy OST Environments

5

Building a Network of Care through Collaboration

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Communicating Clearly and Consistently

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Creating Safe, Healthy, and Responsive OST Environments



Meet Youth Where They Are

Making simple changes can help young people feel safe and know that they belong. Adapt curriculum, schedules, and activities to allow for flexible participation and breaks. Promote peer norms that normalize visible health routines, such as using an inhaler, to reduce stigma. Build in routines, such as scheduled times for medication and hydration, into daily schedules to reinforce healthy habits for all youth.



Support Staff Professional Development

Provide ongoing training so staff feel confident managing daily health needs of youth and responding to emergencies. Training should cover common chronic conditions, symptom recognition, required accommodations, emergency procedures, and the safe use of health devices and medications.



Implement Best Practices

Adopt standards, such as National AfterSchool Association (NAA) [Healthy Eating and Physical Activity \(HEPA\) Standards](#), to strengthen your OST program's healthy foundation. Use CAHE-OST's [Assessment to Action Guide](#) to build a team, assess current practices, set priorities, and create actionable plans for implementing the HEPA Standards and other best practices.



Build a Supportive Culture

Foster an environment of safety, acceptance, and proactive care where staff, youth, and families feel comfortable discussing concerns, asking questions, and sharing solutions related to chronic health conditions. Promote a culture that values ongoing professional learning and growth while reducing barriers to participation, such as time, transportation, and childcare.



Building a Network of Care through Collaboration



Involve Youth

Engage youth as active partners in their health by involving them in planning accommodations, expressing their needs, and shaping routines. Use a strengths-based approach that recognizes them as experts in their own care. Support youth in setting personal health goals, practicing problem-solving strategies, and co-designing parts of the schedule or wellness activities to build ownership and self-management skills.



Participate in Wellness Initiatives

Explore local options to join school wellness councils, advisory committees, or other community-based wellness initiatives. Becoming a partner can lead to shared resources, access to additional expertise, and potential funding for wellness efforts.



Empower Families

Engage families by building strong partnerships rooted in trust, communication, and shared responsibility. Honor their knowledge as experts in their child's care and partner with families to create shared care plans that are simple and practical. Build their confidence and capacity to advocate for their child, such as providing opportunities to participate in or lead trainings or partner meetings to share their expertise as a family member of a child with a chronic health condition.



Collaborate with Partners

Encourage collaboration among families, schools, and medical providers to align on health goals and emergency protocols. Coordinate with school personnel, healthcare providers, and families to develop both program-wide procedures and individualized student care plans.



Communicating Clearly and Consistently



Develop and Communicate Clear Policies

Establish written policies to guide the identification, ongoing support, and emergency response for youth with chronic health conditions. Policies should outline medical services you can and cannot provide and include well defined protocols for medication administration, medication storage and access, and incident documentation



Exchange of Information

Use of shared consent forms and memorandums of understanding enables safe, appropriate exchange of health information. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and National Association of School Nurses (NASN) offer an [Information-Sharing Consent Form Template and Implementation Toolkit](#) that can be adapted for OST programs.



Establish Collaborative Communication Systems

Build effective communication pathways among parents, schools, OST programs, and medical providers to coordinate care and establish shared goals. Identify how youth, staff, families, and providers prefer to communicate. Consider mode of communication, such as phone calls, texts, virtual or in person meetings, language, and frequency.



Be Proactive with Families

Support families with completing intake, consent, and medication administration forms (if needed). Clearly explain how OST health policies may differ from those during the school day. Be transparent about challenges and approach problem-solving collaboratively. Proactively establish relationships with community partners to enable warm handoffs for families.



Chronic Health Conditions in Out-of-School Time Resource List

Essential Resources for OST Programs

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This resource list addresses the following chronic health conditions:

Allergic
Reactions

10

Asthma

11

Diabetes

12

Seizure
Disorders

13

Resources provide general guidance and templates for creating individualized action plans.



Essential Resources for OST Programs

PDF

[Supporting Students with Chronic Health Conditions in School-Based Out of School Time Programs](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

This issue brief presents policy and programmatic considerations for students with chronic health conditions who attend school-based OST programs. It highlights the importance of communication and coordination between students and caregivers, school administration and staff, and OST programs.

BROCHURE

[Chronic Health Condition Management in Out-of-School Time Roadmap](#)

Alliance for a Healthier Generation

This roadmap supports OST professionals with adopting evidence-based practices to help youth with chronic health conditions safely participate in OST programs.

POSTERS

[Students with Chronic Health Conditions Posters: How to Recognize and Respond to Health Emergencies](#)

Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) America

This poster series highlights four of the most common chronic health conditions in youth, what a health emergency for each might look like, and what action steps to take if one occurs.

TOOLKIT

[Improving Care Coordination for Students with Chronic Health Conditions Toolkit](#)

National Association of School Nurses (NASN)

This toolkit provides tools and resources to support the school nurse role in leading care coordination for students with chronic health conditions.

This tool can be adapted to the OST setting or be used as starting point to increase collaboration and streamline communication between OST programs, schools, and medical providers.



Allergic Reactions

[Allergies](#) involve an abnormal reaction to an ordinarily harmless substance called an allergen. Allergens can include food (e.g., milk, egg, wheat, nut), dust, insect stings, mold, and grass/tree pollen among many others. Symptoms can include itchy, watery eyes, a runny nose, stomach cramps, vomiting, diarrhea, or hives. [Anaphylaxis](#) (an-a-fi-LAK-sis) is a severe, potentially fatal, systemic allergic reaction that occurs suddenly after contact with an allergy-causing substance.

PDF



[Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies in Schools and Early Care and Education Programs](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

This guide provides information and planning steps to develop or strengthen plans for preventing and managing food allergies.

TOOLKIT



[Living with Food Allergies: Resources for School & Care Centers](#)

Kids with Food Allergies

This online resource list includes many tools to support managing food allergies in the classroom—many are applicable in OST settings.

TOOLKIT



[Toolkit for Managing Food Allergy in the Classroom](#)

FARE (Food Allergy Research & Education)

This website provides resources to help maintain an environment where youth with food allergies feel safe and protected. Includes free downloadable posters on what a food allergy is, how to avoid food allergy reactions, and how to recognize and respond to anaphylaxis.

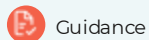
ACTION PLAN



[Anaphylaxis Emergency Action Plan](#)

American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology

This action plan identifies allergy type, symptoms of allergic reaction, and emergency action steps.



Guidance



Action Plan



Asthma

[Asthma](#) is a respiratory condition characterized by inflamed and narrowed airways in the lungs, which makes breathing difficult. This inflammation can cause symptoms such as wheezing, coughing, chest tightness, and shortness of breath. Proper treatment and avoiding certain triggers can help manage asthma effectively.

STRATEGIES



[Creating Lung-Friendly Environments for Youth](#)

American Lung Association

This interactive resource includes strategies and resources for addressing asthma, tobacco, clean air, and more in schools and community-based organizations

INFOGRAPHIC



[Managing Asthma Every Day Infographic](#)

American Academy of Allergy Asthma and Immunology

This infographic highlights common asthma triggers and includes ways to manage symptoms.

ACTION PLAN



[School or Child Care Asthma/ Allergy Action Plan](#)

Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America

This action plan template has sections for a daily medication plan and a list of the child's signs and symptoms. It also has steps on how to handle asthma and allergy emergencies.

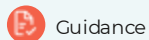
INFOGRAPHIC



[Asthma in Kids Infographic](#)

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute

This infographic highlights the signs of asthma and ways to collaborate with a child's healthcare provider to help kids with asthma live full and active lives.



Guidance



Action Plan



Diabetes

[Diabetes](#) is a condition in which the body struggles to convert sugar into energy. This occurs because the body either doesn't produce enough insulin or can't use it effectively, resulting in elevated blood sugar levels. Type 1 is an autoimmune disease where the body doesn't produce insulin, whereas Type 2 is characterized by insulin resistance. Children with diabetes are at risk for [hypoglycemia](#), when blood sugar is below the target range. Hypoglycemia is an immediate and urgent danger for students and can occur in children with diabetes after too much activity and not enough food. It's important to know the signs of hypoglycemia (shakiness, dizziness, sweating) and have a plan to take immediate action.

WEBSITE



[Managing Diabetes at School](#)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

This website provides an overview of managing diabetes at school, with many considerations for OST programs.

PDF



[Diabetes in the Child Care Setting](#)

California Childcare Health Program

This resource provides an overview of diabetes and factors that affect blood glucose levels, laws, and testing.

ACTION PLAN



[Diabetes Medical Management Plan](#)

American Diabetes Association

The fillable form enables an efficient process for completing student diabetes care orders by offering expanded options for prescribers to customize care instructions for each student.

PDF



[What You Need to Know about Hypoglycemia](#)

Breakthrough T1D

This resource provides the essential information for recognizing the signs for and responding to hypoglycemia.

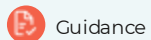
PDF



[Helping the Student with Diabetes Succeed: A Guide for School Personnel](#)

American Diabetes Association

This comprehensive guide supports school staff with effective diabetes management that includes a set of practices that enable staff to ensure a safe environment for students with diabetes. Many of the practice applications can be adapted for OST.



Guidance



Action Plan



Seizure Disorder

[Epilepsy](#) is a brain disorder that causes repeated seizure. Seizures involve uncontrolled electrical activity that alters sensations, behaviors, awareness, and muscle control. Although other factors like high fever, infections, or head injuries can cause seizures, epilepsy is a long-term condition characterized by recurrent seizure episodes.

WEBSITE



[Managing Epilepsy in Schools](#)

Center for Disease Control and Prevention

An overview of understanding epilepsy in schools, covering symptoms, treatment, and ways to address stigma among students.

WEBSITE



[Seizure First Aid](#)

Epilepsy Foundation

This website provides information on the first steps of what to do when a child has a seizure.

TOOLKIT



[Epilepsy & Seizure Safe Classrooms Toolkit](#)

Epilepsy Foundation

This toolkit offers tailored, age-appropriate toolkits for K-12 students, helping to teach essential skills in an engaging and accessible way.

Registration is required to access the toolkit.

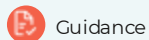
ACTION PLAN



[Seizure Action Plan](#)

Epilepsy Foundation

This website includes templates in multiple languages for creating action plans that capture important information to assist staff when a student is experiencing seizures, including first aid instructions, contact information for families and healthcare providers, and the child's medications.



Guidance



Action Plan





Reach out to CAHE-OST at HealthyOST@edc.org for trainings, resources, and tailored support on a variety of topics that increase the health of all OST staff and youth.

We are here to help you achieve your healthy OST goals!

[View our website for more information](#) 

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