



NEW HAVEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

NEW HAVEN BOARD OF EDUCATION FOOD SERVICE TASK FORCE

MINUTES

October 1, 2019

The meeting was held on Tuesday, October 1, 2019, Gateway Center, 2nd Floor Board Room, 54 Meadow Street, New Haven, CT 06519.

Present: Mr. Matt Wilcox, Mr. Michael Pinto, Ms. Susan Harris, Ms. Latha Swamy, Ms. Hyclis Williams, Ms. Alexia Basile, Nijja-Ife Waters. **Staff:** Ms. Gail Sharry, Mr. Mackie McMillian, Ms. Angie Monack.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mr. Matt Wilcox called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.
- II. **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS:** Mr. Wilcox welcomed the committee and explained that the meeting was scheduled earlier than usual because of the upcoming holiday of Yom Kippur. Members of the committee took turns at introducing themselves.
- III. **UPDATE ON SEPTEMBER FOOD DISTRIBUTION ISSUES:**
 - a. Ms. Gail Sharry, Food Service Director, reported that managers were sent to each school to check freezers and store rooms to make sure all granola bars were removed.
 - b. Ms. Sharry explained that kits with eggs were stopped until new updated allergy lists are received from nurses. The kits will probably resume in November due to parents wanting additional protein in the meals. Food Service staff and nurses will continue to work together to identify students with food allergies. A student with an allergy will have an alternative kit with the student's name on it to avoid getting the allergen(s).

Ms. Hyclis Williams raised a question about the process in place to help food service staff identify children with allergies. Ms. Sharry stated that there is an alert that shows in the computer but its at the end of the line and a better system is currently being explored. Ms. Sharry explained that Food Service staff has 18 minutes to serve all children during a lunch wave and the staff sometimes changes, so additional support would be helpful in identifying children with allergies. Ms. Hyclis suggested to possibly implement a process that includes

school staff being aware of student(s) with allergies and possibly escorting the student(s) with the allergy/allergies through the line first to ensure the student is getting the right meal. Ms. Williams also stated that it is too much for the cafeteria staff to assume all responsibility and some children may be exposed to an allergen from classmates bringing food from home.

Mr. Wilcox wanted to know if there are people working on ideas to improve the implementation of the allergy policy. Ms. Sharry stated that when the allergy policy was introduced initially the bus driver, the director of transportation, the school nurse, and herself were there, but there hasn't been a meeting since the allergy policy was first established. It was suggested that all parties come together to develop a plan and ensure implementation.

IV. OPEN DISCUSSION:

Mr. Wilcox discussed how parts of the protocol are in place but there are gaps. He expressed how Food Service and the nursing staff are doing a huge amount of work in identifying and addressing the needs of students with allergies. He recommends more work on identifying gaps, ways to flag the gaps, determine who is responsible for bridging/fixing gaps, tracking students, making sure the proper forms asking specific health questions are given to parents, and implementing the solution. Mr. Wilcox mentioned that currently, the district is working under a form used by the health department that was last updated in 2009 and addressed the need for that form to be updated.

Ms. Nijja-Ife Waters recommended that the district trains staff on identifying the difference between an allergic reaction and anaphylaxis. Ms. Waters voiced her concerns and wants to see the responsibility spread across all staff. Ms. Waters feels the urgency for a chain of responsibility to be established from starting to end points and an end to people abdicating responsibility and passing blame. She feels it is not only the responsibility of food service but everyone within the school. She wants the committee to be more proactive and see a plan implemented immediately.

Ms. Sharry recommended that procedures for identifying and communicating students' allergies should be one consistent method followed by the entire district so that all schools are doing the procedures in the same manner.

Ms. Waters raised questions about the orientation packet forms. "When the forms in the orientation packet are filled out, where do they go? Does it go into Power School? Does the nurse review for allergies in Power School? Does the nurse then contact the parents about any allergy issues? Is it then sent to Food Service? "

Mr. Wilcox suggests that the next step is to verify where medical information is sent, methods involved, understanding the risk of exposure, response in the event of an exposure, the interactions between parents, nursing staff, teachers, administrators, and Food Service.

Ms. Sharry stated that the nurse sometimes gives a list of students with known allergies printed from Power School either to the cafeteria staff or sends it to her. Sometimes the information is not easy to get because of HIPPA laws and in some cases the parents must sign a release for Food Services to get the needed information. Each school handles this procedure differently. Ms. Sharry stated there are over 1500 students with allergies and over 832 that need an Epi pen. In complex cases, Ms. Sharry reaches out and requests meetings with nurses and parents to get a better understanding of the child's needs. Ms. Sharry prefers the information be given by grade level which is the way the children are served breakfast and lunch and suggested a bracelet worn to help identify students would be helpful.

Mr. Pinto explained that all stakeholders must be a part of the plan. This endeavor will require the involvement of multiple agencies including the Department of Health, City of New Haven, and New Haven Board of Education in order to firm up the transfer of information, reduce the likely hood of exposure to allergens, and improve the reaction time and response in the event of an exposure.

Mr. Wilcox agrees that all stakeholders need to be present to create a plan and will work with the district to see that this happens. Mr. Wilcox included researching and contacting any other agencies that need to be involved, emphasized not depending entirely on Power School, and would like to see a meeting with stakeholders happen in October. Mr. Wilcox also stated that a notice will be sent out by October 25, 2019 to remind parents that Halloween candy is not allowed in school.

V. GOAL SETTING

Food Assistance Resource Guide was made available and will be updated every 6 months through Food Policy Council website.

The New Haven Food Council is working to create a guide for summer meals and will update progress in December.

The New Haven Food Council is developing a solution to close the August 10-day gap between the end of the summer program to the beginning of school and will meet with Ms. Sharry in the future for discussions.

Obtain information on PTO outreach before the summer.

Send reminders in January of summer meals

Explore updating the summer menu.

VI. NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 13, 2019.

VII. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 6:49 p. m.