



A school stock inhaler policy makes sure students with asthma have access to quick-relief medication.

Asthma is a lung disease that causes wheezing, breathlessness, chest tightness, and coughing. There is no cure for asthma. You can control your asthma by knowing the signs of an attack, staying away from asthma triggers, and following a health care provider's advice like taking specific medicine.¹ One way to support asthma control in schools is to have a stock inhaler policy.

WHAT IS A STOCK INHALER?

A stock inhaler is a quick-relief (rescue) inhaler kept by a school. The inhaler is for use in an asthma emergency or another kind of respiratory distress. Stock inhalers contain a medication which works to open the airways in the lungs and make breathing easier.²

HOW CAN A STOCK INHALER POLICY HELP STUDENTS?

- Quickly helps students having trouble breathing due to asthma or another lung disease.
- Reduces missed days of school and avoids 911 calls.
- Promotes a safer learning environment.
- Supports students without asthma medication or those not yet diagnosed with asthma.

HOW STOCK INHALERS HAVE HELPED

A school nurse in Allegheny County was concerned for a student having a lot of difficulty breathing. The student was using a quick-relief inhaler up to 11 times a day. The student was visibly short of breath while seated in the nurse's office. The nurse contacted the student's doctor. The nurse also supported the mother on how to share the seriousness of the situation. The nurse noted the stock inhaler at the school available through the school's stock inhaler policy may have saved the student's life. The nurse said the situation was one of the most distressing in her career and was greatly relieved to have access to the stock inhaler. [Breathe PA](#) supported the school nurse and the school to get the stock inhaler policy passed.

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS CURRENTLY DO IN PENNSYLVANIA?

- Self-Carry: Pennsylvania Act 187 requires schools to develop a written policy to allow students to carry and use their asthma medication. More information can be found on the Department's "[Use of Asthma Inhalers in Schools](#)" webpage.
- School districts can develop their own stock inhaler policy. Several school districts in Pennsylvania have their own policies.
- There is no statewide law for stock inhalers in schools at the time of this publication.

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024, January 22). *About asthma*. [About Asthma | Asthma | CDC](#)

² American Academy of Allergy, Asthma & Immunology. (2023, August). *Stock inhaler toolkit*. [Stock Inhaler Toolkit for Schools](#)



WHAT ARE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK TO GET STARTED?

- What are the asthma medication policies in my school district?
- Who needs to be involved and what do they need to know?
 - Examples are school nurses, parents, school administrators, school board, lawyer, local health care providers, pharmacists, students
- Who can provide the standing orders for medication and spacers?
- How much funding will be needed, and can this be supported long-term?
 - Costs include the medication and the spacers. Based on current experiences, costs are estimated at \$85 per school per year for the medication and spacers.
- Who needs to be trained and how will they be trained?
- What data will need to be collected and reported, and who will be responsible?
- What needs to be done as part of follow-up care?

RESOURCES

- [American Academy of Allergy, Asthma, & Immunology's Stock Inhaler Toolkit for Schools](#) provides information on adopting a stock inhaler policy. The Toolkit includes sample documents.
- The American Lung Association has information and tools to support [asthma medication in schools](#).
 - Webcast: [Strategies for Implementing a Stock Asthma Medication Program in Schools](#) gives an overview of stock inhaler policies, common barriers, and solutions.
 - [Stock Asthma Medication: Implementation Guidance for Schools](#) is a free online course for school staff.
 - [Model Policy for School Districts](#)
 - [Stock Asthma Medication Program Implementation Guide](#)
 - [Stock Asthma Medication Toolkit](#)
 - [Responding to Breathing Emergencies](#) is a free online course for school staff on recognizing and responding to those with respiratory distress.
 - Information on how to [improve asthma management in schools](#).
 - [Asthma-Friendly Schools Initiative](#)
- Policy statement on statewide stock inhaler policies: [Ensuring Access to Albuterol in Schools-From Policy to Implementation](#)
- As part of Breathe PA's [School Asthma Initiative \(SAI\)](#) schools get help creating stock inhaler policies including standing orders. The cost of the stock inhaler is covered for participating schools. In 2025-2026, Breathe PA will be expanding the SAI outside their current 10-county region in southwestern PA. Contact Breathe PA to find out more.
- You can find out how asthma is being addressed in Pennsylvania on the [Department of Health's Asthma website](#).
- If you have questions, contact us at RA-DHPAAsthma@pa.gov