

# My Diabetes Story...

## Ashlynn Berry

### Education about diabetes and its care can make a difference.

The CREST program, run by the city of Santa Monica, California, adds learning adventures to the lives of children who attend. This city-funded program provides enrichment classes, including music, art, theater and sports, to children in grades K-5. Nine-year-old Ashlynn had been participating in the program since she was five, including volleyball and track and field.

### But in April 2015, Ashlynn was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes and her access to CREST activities became more limited.

Ashlynn's mother, Audrey, learned that the program would not train its staff to administer glucagon, which is sometimes necessary to treat episodes of extremely low blood glucose. Without trained staff, Ashlynn would not be fully protected unless her mother could be there to administer glucagon, if needed. Audrey was told that the City of Santa Monica feared a lawsuit if its staff did not administer glucagon correctly, and that was the reason for the policy.



### Ashlynn loved being part of the program.

Audrey, a single mother who could not always be there the entire time, worried that if the CREST staff was not able to provide glucagon when it was needed, Ashlynn could not attend. This was not acceptable. So Audrey contacted the program directors and tried to educate them about diabetes care. She also stressed that it would not endanger Ashlynn's life if someone gave her glucagon, even if she didn't need it. But the program's policy still did not change. Ashlynn was only able to attend CREST when Audrey could also be there. That meant that Ashlynn had to miss out on many activities she loved.

### Audrey contacted the American Diabetes Association® for help.

She confirmed that Ashlynn had the legal right to fully participate in the program. A legal advocate at the Association gave Audrey some information and guidance. Audrey then wrote a letter to the program that outlined Ashlynn's rights and addressed the program's concerns about its legal responsibility.

**Things turned around.** The directors of CREST program changed the policy and agreed to train their staff about type 1 diabetes, diabetes care (including glucagon administration) and the signs and symptoms of hypoglycemia. Ashlynn would be able to fully attend the program once again. Audrey's experience working on this issue was a positive one. She says that the program's directors were nothing but gracious through the whole process. And the result was what she wanted for Ashlynn.

**Audrey's advice.** The Association is here to help. You can fight discrimination when you understand the laws that protect people with diabetes and can educate others about diabetes care. Sometimes information and negotiation goes a long way. "Thank you to the American Diabetes Association's legal advocate for her time, effort and expertise," says Audrey. "When you see your child triumph through the daily struggles of managing type 1 diabetes, you will go to great lengths to ensure his or her well-being. For every parent out there who feels defeated by the weight of advocating for your child, remind yourself that there are people out there who will help. When you feel like you are going through a rough journey all by yourself, stay true to yourself and your cause. The city of Santa Monica, the American Diabetes Association and I worked positively together to achieve the best outcome for my daughter, Ashlynn. For this I am grateful."

The American Diabetes Association's *Safe at School*® Campaign Helps Children Who Have Diabetes



The American Diabetes Association leads the effort to prevent and eliminate discrimination against people who have diabetes at school, at work and in other parts of daily life.



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