Jodi Gast, of Hollywood, Florida, was trying to hold back tears.

It was October 2014, and she had to take her 6-year-old son, Nico, to the emergency room because he was sick. At the hospital, she learned that the cause of his illness was type 1 diabetes. She could not even bring herself to say the word, diabetes. But, that diagnosis meant that Jodi and her husband had to quickly learn about diabetes, including how to care for Nico on a daily basis, give him insulin shots and spot the warning signs of a diabetes emergency.

After learning that Nico had diabetes, the family had to make changes, including Jodi adjusting her daily work schedule.

The school feared a lawsuit if any of its school staff gave Nico his shots, so Jodi became his caregiver at school. She traveled from her home office to Nico’s school around noon each day to give him an insulin shot. This continued for several months. And because nobody at the school was trained about diabetes, Nico was also unable to participate in after-school programs and activities.

The entire situation was frustrating for the family and seemed unfair to Nico. Then Jodi contacted the American Diabetes Association for help.

A Legal Advocate at the Association (a lawyer experienced in diabetes discrimination) let Jodi know about Nico’s legal rights. Under federal law, Nico’s school had to provide him proper diabetes care. Once Jodi was aware of the law, she shared this information with school staff.

Although the school did not admit it had been wrong, the administrators DID allow Nico’s three teachers to be trained in diabetes care. A wonderful nurse, whose grandson also has diabetes, volunteered to train the teachers. Other school staff also volunteered to be trained. “The teachers were given the confidence to try, and they succeeded,” says Jodi.

Nico now checks his own blood glucose level and gives himself shots. He sometimes needs help with aspects of his care, like figuring out the amount of insulin to use, but things are on track. Nico turns 7 on August 26, 2015, and he will start second grade in September. One of the teachers originally trained in his care has left the school. But other teachers and staff have been trained, so everything is set for the new school year.

“We all learned a great deal and things have gotten easier. We are very thankful that we received help and support from the American Diabetes Association. We hope that other parents in similar positions learn about the help available.” – Jodi Gast

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

Safe at School

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.

Call 1-800-DIABETES (342-2383) or visit diabetes.org/-gethelp