



By CRYSTAL JACKSON

# Lesson Plans

*How to keep your kid safe at school*

**YOU'VE BOUGHT YOUR CHILD A BRAND NEW BACKPACK** and stocked up on notebooks and pens. You've picked out some snazzy new school shoes and divined the latest fashion in jeans.

If your child has diabetes, however, you'll have to go a bit further with your back-to-school preparations. Diabetes management is a 24-hours-a-day, 7-days-a-week affair; as you know all too well, the need to keep blood glucose levels in check doesn't end when your child boards the school bus. Because you can't be with your child during the school day, it's important to work closely with the school nurse and other personnel to make sure your child's needs are met during school hours and activities.

Here are some important steps to take before that first morning bell rings.

**Know your child's rights.** Three federal laws may protect your child against discrimination: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act; the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Your state may also have additional antidiscrimination laws on the books.

To ensure that your child is evaluated properly for coverage under these laws, contact your school's 504/IDEA coordinator. This administrator is usually the principal or a guidance counselor. He or she will coordinate a team of school staff members to determine how the laws apply to your child.





**Help your school nurse.** The school nurse makes sure your child receives the appropriate health care on school premises and that all other school personnel have the training they need to assist your child. Ask your school nurse how you can help.

If your school doesn't have an assigned nurse on staff, consult with the principal to find out who will coordinate and perform the necessary care for your child's diabetes.



**Write it down.** To ensure your child gets appropriate medical care at school, you'll need two important documents. First, you'll need a diabetes management plan in which your child's doctor and diabetes educator will

set out your child's health care needs. The plan should include orders for blood glucose monitoring and medication and state which diabetes care tasks your child should be permitted to do on his or her own.

Next, in a separate document, state specifically the who, what, when, and where for each aspect of diabetes care. Depending on which laws apply to your child, this may be called a 504 Plan or an Individualized Education Program. It should state specifically what is expected of each school staff member who interacts with your child during regular school days, field trips, extracurricular activities, exams, or emergencies. If your child had a plan last year, make sure it's updated for the new school year.

**Be a resource.** Everyone who has responsibility for your child should be able to recognize signs of low or high blood glucose and know who to contact for help. In addition to the school nurse, several teachers, coaches, and cafeteria workers should be trained in basic diabetes care such as blood glucose monitoring and administering insulin or glucagon. Although it's the school's responsibility to



## SCHOOL RESOURCES ON THE WEB

### Diabetes and the Law

*From the American Diabetes Association, a guide to the law*  
[diabetes.org/for-parents-and-kids/diabetes-and-the-law.jsp](http://diabetes.org/for-parents-and-kids/diabetes-and-the-law.jsp)

### For Schools

*ADA information for teachers and staff*  
[diabetes.org/for-parents-and-kids/for-schools.jsp](http://diabetes.org/for-parents-and-kids/for-schools.jsp)

### School Discrimination

*ADA advice for dealing with diabetes at school*  
[diabetes.org/schooldiscrimination](http://diabetes.org/schooldiscrimination)

### School Personnel

*A page geared toward school personnel from the National Diabetes Education Program of the National Institutes of Health*  
[ndep.nih.gov/resources/school.htm](http://ndep.nih.gov/resources/school.htm)

provide personnel who can meet your child's needs, you may have contacts in the diabetes community who can help. Do you know diabetes health care providers willing to help the school nurse provide training to other staff? Do you have expired supplies they can use for practice?

**Send supplies.** Finally, make sure your school has what it needs to help your child. Provide diabetes equipment, supplies, and snacks. Make sure your child wears medical identification, as well.

Proper diabetes management at school benefits everyone. School staff will spend less time

## HOW the American Diabetes Association Can Help

Need a jump start? The ADA can send you a **free school discrimination packet** containing information, a sample 504 Plan, and a sample diabetes management plan. ADA Staff can also discuss specific school challenges. Call 1-800-342-2383 to speak with a representative.

If you'd like to **advocate for all children with diabetes**, join ADA's Safe at School Campaign. This is a comprehensive program aimed at making sure every student with diabetes is medically safe and has the same access to school-sponsored opportunities as other students. **Check out [diabetes.org/safeatschool](http://diabetes.org/safeatschool) for details.**

treating low blood glucose episodes, you'll have peace of mind knowing that your child will get appropriate diabetes care, and, most important, your child will be safe. ▲

*Crystal Jackson is manager, Legal Advocacy, at the American Diabetes Association in Alexandria, Va., and the parent of a teenager with diabetes.*



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