



CARING FOR STUDENTS WITH DIABETES AT FOOTHILL HORIZONS OUTDOOR SCHOOL

CONTEXT

Students with diabetes who attend Foothill Horizons Outdoor School are generally much more active and are eating different foods during their stay. These two differences often result in students with diabetes being out of their ideal range for blood glucose levels. A student who is out of range must receive care from a trained adult in order to be safe.

At school students are often sent to the office when their blood glucose is out of range. A trained adult, a secretary, health clerk or Registered School Nurse supervises the child while s/he has a snack, retests, calls home or goes home. This adult knows when it is acceptable to send a child back to class, seek medical care, or when to administer emergency medication.

At Foothill Horizons Outdoor School, a child will be a 5-20 minute walk away from the office. It is not safe to expect a child who has low blood glucose to exercise by walking to the office. That child must be supervised on the trail by a trained adult or escorted by a trained adult who can administer emergency medication in case the child loses consciousness.

At home after school parents continually monitor their child's blood glucose level and change medication dosages to accommodate for increased exercise or decreased food intake. Parents also monitor a child's blood glucose just before bed and in the middle of the night.

At Foothill Horizons Outdoor School, a child must be cared for 24 hours a day. That evening care provided by the family must be provided at Foothill Horizons Outdoor School as well. In addition, the changes in activity and carbohydrate intake often result in more blood glucose checks and more care than at school.

Caring for a child with diabetes at Foothill Horizons requires:

- Individual care for 20 minutes at each meal each day
- Constant attention 24 hours a day
- Additional supervision when students experience highs, lows, or problems with insulin injections, pumps, etc.
- Many conversations with parents
- Carbohydrate research with kitchen staff
- Communication with diabetes experts to make changes to orders and clarify differences between school care and 24-hour care
- Trained responses in case of emergency
- More blood glucose checks than usual
- Night time checks and care

The number of students with diabetes is increasing in the Central Valley as well as the number of students with other severe health concerns such as asthma, life-threatening allergies, seizure disorders, heart conditions, and kidney disease. The result is that each week we may have nine or more students who each have individual care plans and require extra support to be safe. Foothill Horizons Outdoor School cannot meet all of these

increasing and variable health needs, even if we hiring a full time Registered School Nurse. Moreover, the care provided by those who know the child is more effective and safer.

DISTRICT CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATIONS

The district's contract with Foothill Horizons Outdoor School states that the district must provide the same support on a 24-hour basis at Foothill Horizons Outdoor School as the district provides during school hours. For example, the district must provide aides, small classroom environment, and assistance with toileting or eating. For diabetes, often an office staff member or health clerk assists in monitoring the student's diabetes at school. For other concerns, such as daily injections or care provided at home but not at school, the district is not responsible.

CONTRACTUAL EXCERPT (PAGE 1-2)

- (e) In order to provide equal access and because the students will be living in an outdoor education facility around the clock, the DISTRICT must provide all students, on a 24-hour basis, with the same individualized support as they receive at school. If a special education student or student with a disability or on a 504 plan is receiving unique or one-on-one services the DISTRICT must also provide the same services at the outdoor education facility. Examples of such individualized support include, but are not limited to, one-on-one assistance, assisting students in wheelchairs, providing interpreters for deaf and partial hearing students, specialized medical assistance or a recurring need for medical observation, and aiding students who need assistance showering, toileting, dressing, and eating. Specifically, if a student with an Individualized Student Health Care Plan attends outdoor education and the DISTRICT does not provide a nurse to monitor or provide nursing services to the student, DISTRICT agrees that it will refund to SCOE any costs SCOE incurs as a result of providing nursing or other necessary medical care or services to the student during the time the student attends Foothill Horizons Outdoor School.

CARE OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH DIABETES

Safest Care at Foothill: The Parent/Guardian

A student with diabetes attends with their Parent or Parent Designee.

- That person knows how to identify the child's highs and lows.
- That person can maintain the home routine.
- The child does not need to come back to the health office to call home, a 5-20 minute walk.
- That person can change insulin dosage based on the child's acute needs.
- That person knows how to handle other relevant factors (autism, manipulative behavior, anxiety, etc.).
- Doctors who write care plans have never been to the site or observed the program so they cannot anticipate how the child's schedule/ meds/ care should be different during a week of Outdoor School; parents can make those in-the-moment decisions while their child is here.

Safe Care at Foothill: School designee

A student with diabetes attends with school appointed designee (aide, teacher, sub teacher, office staff, LVN, RN)

- That person must be trained by the school nurse and parent to care for the child at Foothill in a face-to-face meeting with all parties, often IEP meetings.
- Parents sign the Parent Designee documents for the school personnel. The district could require additional documentation.
- The student can be with his/her teacher and group. The shadow can go with them everywhere.
- The child can receive the attention and time they need at any moment, such as snack breaks, insulin breaks, conversations, and bathroom breaks.
- That child can have his/her HIPPA rights protected.

Acceptable Safe Care: One district staff caring for multiple students with diabetes

Multiple students with diabetes attend with one school appointed designee (aide, teacher, sub teacher, office staff, LVN, RN)

- That person must be trained by the school nurse and parents to care for both children while they are at Foothill; face-to-face meeting with all parties must take place, often IEP meetings.
- Parents sign the Parent Designee Documents with the school personnel. The district could require additional documentation.
- All students with diabetes must stay together. If one child needs to be separated to test Blood Glucose, then all those with diabetes have to wait together (staying safe but missing out on learning opportunities).
- The children's HIPPA rights are not protected; it is not possible to protect the privacy of both students when they all need to be together.

CONCLUSIONS

If any child is unsafe at Foothill, they will not remain here. For students with diabetes, that often means they must respond to requests for blood glucose checks, let an adults know if they feel low or high, and be honest about food consumption. If the Parent Shadow or Designee is not being safe, he or she will be sent home with the child they are providing care for.

The District must provide care for all children who they already provide care for at school as stated in the contract.

Decisions about who will provide care at Foothill Horizons Outdoor School should be made at the local level by the parties who know the student best, keeping the individual child in mind. Parents, nurses, and special education coordinators are encouraged to seek more information from Foothill Horizons Outdoor School to enable a safe experience for all students.

TIPS FROM EXPERIENCED NURSES

- Start planning at 5th grade IEP meetings. Do the parents want to even consider the possibility of attending? Do they want to learn more or go to the spring Foothill Horizons Open House?
- Consider the child and the family. How responsible is the child/family? Can the parents get time off of work? Do they have another family member or close friend whom they trust? Does the child have other health or behavioral concerns?
- If the District might have to provide care consider:
 - Blocking time off months in advance for a nurse, health tech, aide or additional teacher
 - Hiring from an outside nursing agency (include advance planning time)
- Decisions for care must be made at the local level with those who know the child best.