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Proposed Amendments to Education Regulations Will Better Equip Schools to Assist Children with Asthma

The New Jersey State Board of Education today discussed proposed regulations that would assure the health needs of students diagnosed with asthma are addressed. The regulations are proposed as amendments to the administrative code to conform with a recently enacted state law.

"Asthma can affect student attendance and interfere with academic and social development," said Commissioner of Education Vito A. Gagliardi, Sr. "The proposed amendments will have a positive impact on the development of students with asthma by providing assurance that they can attend school in an environment that protects their health and well-being."

Commissioner Gagliardi commended Senate Majority Leader John O. Bennett, R-Monmouth, and Sen. Diane Allen, R-Burlington, for sponsoring S-1372, which allows any pupil who is permitted to self-administer medication to carry an inhaler at all times, providing he does not endanger himself or others through misuse. Under regulations adopted by the State Board of Education, in consultation with the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services, each local board of education is required to develop policies regulating the administration of asthma medication through the use of a nebulizer.

"The nebulizer law recognizes the special needs of asthmatic children and assures them of a protective environment in school," said Maud Dahme, president of the State Board of Education. "I can personally see the value of these safeguards as a result of my experience with family members who have had asthma. Our efforts will lead to the adoption of regulations that will guide schools in assisting the children in all of our schools - public and nonpublic."

The Commissioner of Education, pursuant to the bill that was signed into law on April 19, must ensure that annual asthma education opportunities are available for all members of the teaching staff.

The law requires schools to buy and maintain nebulizers to respond to the needs of students who need immediate assistance to manage their asthma. By law, the Department of Education is responsible for the costs associated with implementing the law and regulation, including the initial costs of purchasing a nebulizer, for public and nonpublic schools.

In addition to the requirement for nebulizers in all schools, the amendments include the following highlights:

- Requirement for school boards to develop policies for the treatment in the school setting.
- Requirement that a certified school nurse be authorized and trained to administer asthma medication, and that any school nurse authorized to administer asthma medication in school shall also receive training to administer asthma medication.
- Requirement that each student authorized to use asthma medication in school have an asthma treatment plan prepared by the student's physician.

The board will continue public deliberations on the amendments at discussion and proposal level over the next few months before it comes to the board at adoption level in March 2002.