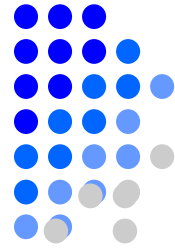




# Food Allergy Tips for PTA Leaders



## School Community

PTAs often serve as the glue that binds the school community together. As a PTA leader, you play a critical role in creating an atmosphere of acceptance and inclusivity for all students. Children with food allergies can have life-threatening reactions with exposures to even tiny amounts of allergen. All food allergies need to be taken seriously. Strict avoidance of food allergens is the only way to prevent a reaction.



*Let's help "make every child's potential a reality by engaging and empowering families and communities to advocate for all children."*

Kids with food allergies need to do certain things to stay safe. Sometimes the constant need to avoid allergens and be prepared for an allergic reaction can set these members of our school communities apart from their peers. Unfortunately, students with food allergies are sometimes excluded from activities or experiences and sometimes the subject of bullying, teasing or harassment. Fortunately, with an aware and understanding community, children with food allergies can participate in and benefit from all the great experiences and opportunities that their peers do.

### FOOD ALLERGY FACTS

- 1 in 13 children in America has a food allergy (2 children in every classroom)
- Food allergies can be life-threatening and need to be taken seriously
- Strict avoidance of the food allergen is the only way to prevent a reaction
- Children can be allergic to any food, but 90% of children are allergic to one or more of the following foods: milk, egg, peanut, tree nut, fish, shellfish, wheat and soy
- 35% of children with food allergies have been bullied due to their allergy
- Outside foods are a common cause of allergic reactions in the classroom

## Planning Events: Consider Non-Food Options

With food allergies on the rise, your PTA can make a huge difference to help ensure that all students in your community can safely participate.

### Consider putting each event/activity through a 3-point checklist:

1. What is the goal of the event/activity?
2. Can this goal be achieved without food? (If so, eliminate it.)
3. If not, how can we choose foods that will allow everyone in our school community to fully & safely participate? (The answer to this will vary based on the specific needs of your school community. Check out some simple tips at right!)

## Tips to Make PTA Events Safe & Inclusive

- Avoid using food when possible.
- If not possible to eliminate all food, choose activities and foods that allow all children to safely participate.
- Engage parents of children with food allergies in PTA event planning process. They are a valuable resource!
- Use individually wrapped and labeled foods at event. This helps prevent cross-contact and allows parents to read labels to ensure child safety.
- Do not serve food to any child without parent knowledge and consent.
- If food is served, try to keep it isolated to one area and encourage hand washing afterward.
- Provide means for children to wash their hands, as necessary. (Commercial wipes okay. Hand sanitizer not sufficient.)
- Invite parents of children with food allergies to attend events and monitor their child.
- Be aware that some non-food items, such as craft supplies, may contain allergens.
- Adult attitudes can have significant impact on how children with food allergies are treated.

**Make it a priority to create a caring environment!**

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