

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.

What does Kentucky, Indiana, Texas, Illinois, New Jersey, and Virginia have that Ohio does not have? Apart from Ohio each of those six states have a Seizure Safe Schools Law. Kentucky became the first state to enact a Seizure Safe Schools law in April 2018. The law was the result of two years of advocacy by Lyndsey Crunk, and her parents. Several other states have introduced bills or have advocacy efforts underway to enact seizure safe laws in their public schools.

The Seizure Safe Schools initiative aims to ensure students with epilepsy feel safe in school. Why Do States Need Seizure Safe Schools Laws? Living with a serious, chronic condition like epilepsy is not just a danger to a child's health. Epilepsy can pose a threat to a child's ability to thrive socially, emotionally, and academically. A Seizure Safe Schools Law will help students with epilepsy express their full academic potential and build lasting friendships without fear of stigma. Seizure Safe Schools legislation also seeks to ensure standardized, in-case-of-seizure emergency protocols by training school personnel and students on best practices. There are too many people who do not know what to do when someone is having a seizure.

The model Seizure Safe Schools bill is a four-point plan to raise awareness about epilepsy and to ensure a uniform, high-quality standard of response, care, and support for students with seizure disorders. The four components are:

- Train school nurses, educators, health care aides, and other school employees and volunteers on seizure recognition, emergency response, and first aid delivery.
- Mandate that every student with a diagnosed seizure disorder has a seizure action plan (including a copy of any prescriptions) on file. All school personnel responsible for the student should be able to access this plan.
- During the school day, ensure students with epilepsy can access the FDA-approved, anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) prescribed to them by their treating physician.
- Raise epilepsy awareness among the student community and teach students basic seizure-response measures.

Recent research shows that good grades are not just based on intelligence. Kids learn better and fare better at school when they feel safe. Serious health conditions such as epilepsy affect students' physical and mental well-being, performance, participation, and school attendance.

According to the U.S Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), children ages 6 to 17 years old with epilepsy were more likely to have missed 11 or more days of school in the past year when compared to children with other chronic illnesses. Kids with epilepsy participated less in extracurricular sports or clubs compared with students with other medical conditions. Students

with epilepsy were also more likely to face learning difficulties in school or to require special education services than their peers.

A child's chances of academic success increase when communities, schools, families, and parents work together to support them. Students with epilepsy often experience bullying or say they feel unaccepted by their peers who do not understand their condition. The Seizure Safe Schools initiative aims to raise awareness about epilepsy and thereby eliminate the stigma.

When students with chronic conditions have direct access to a school nurse and other health services, health outcomes improve. School-based health services can connect students to appropriate clinical care and disease management outside of school.

When a student's primary health care provider collaborates with school-based health services, the continuity of that student's epilepsy management plan is more likely to be successful. Consistent treatment is key to helping students with epilepsy succeed at school.

Additionally, when schools identify and track students who have chronic health conditions, they are better able to assess the potential need for more case management. They may also be able to enroll students into private, state, or federally funded insurance programs (where eligible).

Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological disorders and the leading cause of seizures worldwide. According to the CDC, 3.4 million people in the United States are living with epilepsy. Of these, 470,000 are children.

Living with and caring for a school-aged child with epilepsy comes with unique challenges. Know that you are not alone. Epilepsy Alliance Ohio is here to help you.

Epilepsy Alliance Ohio has been working hard to get a Seizure Smart Law developed for the state of Ohio. Your children and the other children in Ohio deserve a Seizure Safe Schools Law.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

Steve.Hutton@epilepsy-ohio.org