Emergency Medical Treatment Guidance for Schools – Parents and Pupils

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The Outdoor Education & External Visits website is at

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDANCE

This document has been written in conjunction with Public Health and SCC Legal Services to provide guidance for schools and educational establishments where emergency treatment is required for a child or young person on a trip or activity in line with parental consent and the school’s emergency procedures.

This advice is written in order to address medical consent in the event of a pupil:

- being seriously injured
  - or
- suffering from some other condition requiring urgent medical attention during school or whilst on a school trip.

MEDICAL POSITION: AT SCHOOL

Medical Treatment Policy

Schools and educational establishments are encouraged to include pupils and young people with medical conditions on school trips and activities where practicable. A good way by which schools or educational establishments can provide clear guidance to parents on the procedure it will follow when supervising young people with medical needs on a school trip or activity is through a Medical Treatment Policy.

The policy will request that parents inform the school of any medical conditions, allergies or prescribed medicines that a young person requires whilst at school or on school related trips and activities. The policy will advise parents that any medical information provided will be treated in confidence and will only be available to staff that have responsibilities for a young person with a medical need. The policy will cover both day-to-day school activities as well as school trips and will stipulate that the consent to medical treatment will remain the sole responsibility of the parents, in consultation with medical experts, where an emergency arises.
The policy should also outline the procedure on dealing with children/young people where religious or cultural beliefs may cause conflict with medical treatment. Essentially, the policy will request that parents discuss any religious/cultural concerns with the head so that the Visit Leader or designated responsible adult on the trip is aware of a specified issue where parental consent is not given to medical treatment in the event of an emergency.

**Parental/Medical Consent**

Gaining Parental Consent is needed when planning a trip or activity that will take place outside of school hours or for trips that take place both during and outside of school hours where there is a higher level of risk i.e. adventurous activities. It is not a matter for schools to give consent to medical treatment for a child. The role of the school is:

- to ensure that a child gains access to the medical services needed;
- to provide the medical professionals with as much information as possible including the contact details of the child’s parent/guardian who are the **ONLY** people who may give consent on behalf of that child or young person. In addition, the school will also provide medical professionals the child’s medical information (normally detailed on a consent or medical form) which contains information of any allergies, conditions, prescribed medicines or treatment.
- To advise medical professionals who are due to perform treatment details of a child’s religious or cultural belief, if the medical treatment causes a conflict of interest i.e. Jehovah Witnesses. In such cases the issue must be addressed between the treating medical professional and the parents.
- to inform parents with the address and contact details of the medical facility and doctor as soon as possible so that parents know where their child has been taken and the medical specialist to discuss and consent to medical treatment.

The EV5 and EV6 parental consent forms found on the [Templates and forms](#) page of the Somerset County Council Outdoor Education website provides a useful means to gain medical information for a child prior to a school trip or activity.

Furthermore, the consent forms mentioned above include a Medical Information section which parents must complete and sign to give consent to a planned trip or activity. Parents responsible for the child can also specify exclusions on the form, namely any form of medical treatment that they would **NOT** consent to, e.g. blood transfusions. If consent is not given for certain medical treatments the ultimate decision will not be made by the school staff – the medics will decide how to proceed. If the medical professionals feel that treatment is in the child’s best interests then they may well decide to go ahead with the treatment **without parental consent**, although every effort will be made to contact the parents beforehand to discuss the child’s condition and proposed treatment.

Parental consent is confirmed by way of a Declaration signed by the responsible parent endorsing the child’s participation on the trip or activity and any concerns the responsible parent has regarding their child’s medical needs.

If a parent does not agree to the provision of certain treatment or procedures, it would be advisable for the school to draw up an agreed medical emergency plan with the parent prior to the trip, home or abroad. The plan should make clear that the school’s position is non-negotiable. If parents do not agree to this, headteachers may decide to withdraw the child from the visit, given the additional responsibility this would entail for the group leader.
MEDICAL POSITION: SCHOOL TRIPS ABROAD

It is important to acknowledge that the position with regard to consent to medical treatment may be different in other countries. The group leader of the trip should know and understand how to contact the emergency services in the country concerned as part of the planning process for the trip. Contact with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, or with the UK embassy in the country of travel is also advisable.

Parents should be warned that medics in some countries could refuse to offer life saving treatment; if they are made aware that the parents do not consent to such treatment; equally they may administer treatment even if consent has not been given.

Insurance

If a school has any concerns regarding an overseas trip then it would be advisable for them to contact the County’s insurance department, or their own purchased insurance supplier; if a school has taken out alternative insurance with another company then it would be advisable to liaise with them if a parent is not consenting to certain medical treatment, as this may affect the insurance cover. It may also be advisable to contact the County Health and Safety department.

Again, even though parents have been warned prior to the trip that the school is not responsible for the actions taken by medics, there are rare occasions where parents will take legal action against medical staff and/or the school. This is why liaising with insurance and Health and Safety is important.

LIFE OR DEATH SITUATIONS

In this country, if there is a life or death situation the medics will make a decision about treatment whether there is parental consent or not. If they are aware that the parents do not consent to a particular treatment, and there is time, they may refer the matter to the High Court to make a decision as to whether the treatment should be administered.

RELATED GUIDANCE

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the following:

Health and Safety Executive – School Trips
http://www.hse.gov.uk/services/education/faqs.htm

Outdoor Education National Guidance
Medical treatment - trips abroad

Foreign and Commonwealth Office – travel advice
https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice

Somerset County Council Insurance
https://slp.somerset.org.uk/sites/insurance/SitePages/Home.aspx