



Parent/Caregiver Checklist

It is starting! Whether you are sending your first child off to college or your third, addressing food allergies can be complex and feel confusing. The key to success is doing the work early and ahead of time, establishing the protocol for the next several years.

Use this checklist to help you navigate the process of transferring food allergy management to your child while exploring colleges, trade schools, and two-year programs.

Choose which suggestions below apply to your student's needs.

Explore

- As they explore college campuses, consider guiding them to ask a few questions during in-person or virtual tours:
 - o Does this college have a written food allergy management policy in place and on the website?

 - o Who is the contact to learn more about food allergy accommodations?

 - o Which office should be contacted to discuss food allergy management as it relates to dining services and student housing?

 - o What type of food service is available? Is there one main dining hall, made-to-order food outlets, or fast-food options?

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Learn the Language

- Teach your student the official food allergy language. Studies show that some teens with food allergies do not understand the term anaphylaxis! How can we expect them to seek help for a life-threatening allergic reaction if they do not know what it is called?
 - o Teach your child about what anaphylaxis is, including signs and symptoms, and how others might use the term.
 - o Ensure they understand that their EpiPen® or Auvi-Q® devices are epinephrine auto-injectors and are sometimes referred to as “rescue medications.”
- Learn the college lingo. Many colleges use different names for the same departments or functions.
 - o Colleges use different names for the same department. For example, Disability Services at one school may be called Academic Support at another.
 - o An RA is a Resident Assistant or Resident Advisor who will oversee immediate dorm room floors or specific areas. Some colleges use the term CA for Community Advisor or Community Assistant.
 - o At the dorm, an RD is the Resident Director, who oversees the entire residential area.

- o RD can also refer to a Registered Dietician, who often oversees management of students with food allergies.
- o Empower your student to discuss their allergy and anaphylaxis emergency plans with their roommates and close friends, so they too know the lingo and can act in the event of an emergency.

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Accommodations

- Start conversations with your child and allergist to establish what types of accommodations your student may need at college.
 - o Does your child have other health needs, such as asthma or anxiety, which may require additional accommodations? (For example, an air conditioner so windows do not have to be left open, which could allow asthma-triggering allergens into the room.)
 - o Does your student have environmental allergies, such as dust or mold? If so, older dorms may be an issue.
 - o Is your child interested in living with a roommate or in a single (one-person) dorm room? Some colleges have limited singles, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, so it is important to learn about the ability and ease of securing a medical single early on.
- Contact the school's Office of Disabilities Service to identify a contact your child can speak to or email to learn about the process of securing accommodations.
- Visit the [Legal Considerations section](#) of this toolkit to learn about your child's rights at college to receive accommodations.

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Dining Services

- Many campuses offer a wide range of eating options. For example, there may be several dining halls, food service outlets, coffee shops, or even off-campus eateries affiliated with the college for your student to choose from. Dorm rooms and suites may offer cooking options for students.
 - o Visit the college's website to review dining options.
 - o What types of meal plans are available for students to choose from, and will those options offer your child safe and nutritious choices?
 - o Email or call the dining services department director to inquire about how students with food allergies are accommodated.
 - o Some campuses prepare made-to-order meals, others label for allergens, while another campus may offer a unique Top 8 Allergen-free pantry or online ingredient information. Confirm options available to students.
 - o **NOTE:** Do not be discouraged if a campus does not have a food allergy policy in place or if their approach appears to be lacking. If so, meet with the Disabilities Director and ask how your student can work with staff once they are accepted.
 - o Many colleges are embracing food allergy management, but others need support. Food allergen training courses can help.
 - [FAACT partnered with MenuTrinfo®](#) to make serving those with food allergies even safer for

decades to come. MenuTrinfo's AllerTrain™ program, launched in 2011, was accredited by ANSI in 2014 and is the leading platform in the food service industry. This ground-breaking partnership brought expert oversight from and additional content vetted by FAACT's Medical Advisory Board to achieve even stronger and clearer education for those who complete the training. E-Learning and in-person training are available in English and Spanish, with additional languages on the horizon, to teach restaurant and cafeteria staff how to safely serve people with food allergies.

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Student Housing

- ❑ Many campuses offer a wide range of housing options, but often freshmen are limited on choices. Your child can email the director of student housing to learn about living arrangement options for students with food allergies.
 - Ask about what type of housing is available. Single dorm rooms, shared rooms, small group living?

 - Are there shared kitchen options for students? If so, would this option be safe for your student?

 - Ask if students can have microwaves, small refrigerators, or small appliances, such as hot water kettles, in dorm rooms.

 - Ask your student if they want a roommate. If so, ask how students with food allergies are matched.

 - Ask if medical singles are readily available. Covid-19 has impacted housing configurations.

 - Learn how bathrooms are managed. Are they shared by an entire floor, private in the dorm room, or shared by a limited number of students? Can your student request no allergens in bathing products or cleaners, such as hand soaps in the bathroom or cleaning agents used in shared bathrooms or common areas?

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Emergencies and Medical Management

- ❑ Managing food allergies includes two critical steps: reducing risk by taking steps each day to prevent an allergic reaction and being ready to take swift action if a reaction occurs.
 - How are medical emergencies handled on campus?
 - Do students call 911 or campus security? _____

- How long does it take to get help?

- o Does the campus stock emergency epinephrine? If so, who is authorized to administer it?

- Who will assist students if someone is experiencing an allergic reaction in their dorm room, classroom, dining hall, library, or anywhere on campus?

- o Is emergency medical care close by? Are there local hospitals with functioning Emergency Departments?

- If your student participates in a food allergy treatment, such as SLIT or OIT, do you need to find a local board-certified allergist, or can the college's health clinic assist in administering treatment?

- Are there board-certified allergists or other medical specialists near campus?

- Has your child received an updated [Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan](#) from their board-certified allergist? This should be carried with your student at all times (especially meals) in case of an emergency.

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Self-Management

- Before your child heads off to college, they need to understand how to self-manage life confidently and effectively with food allergies.

- o Consider creating a list of skills your child needs to master before heading to college and start teaching and allowing them to learn these as applicable:

- Reading labels and calling manufacturers
- Choosing safe restaurants and entertainment venues
- Speaking to wait staff or staff at fast-food eateries
- Grocery shopping
- Ordering medications
- Managing expirations dates
- Learning how pharmacy hours differ from store hours
- Making doctor or dental appointments
- Completing medical forms
- Managing debit or credit cards
- Learning how to stock up on nutrition-dense safe foods
- Doing laundry – purchasing safe laundry detergents

- Communication is a critical area that many students find challenging, yet it is the driving force behind many successful college stories.

- o Honestly evaluate your child's ability to communicate about their food allergy with other adults or strangers.
- o What strategies can you use to enhance their communications skills?
 - Teach students how to send written communication, including how to follow up.
 - Roleplay explaining their food allergy to campus staff.
 - Determine what their communication strengths are. How can you help develop areas that may be lacking?

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Passing the Torch

- As your student tours college campuses, begin to step back.
 - o Encourage your student to create their list of questions.
 - o Change your language to “what questions will you ask” instead of “what questions are we going to ask.”
- Get familiar with the process. Read the [“Three Steps to Saying Yes to College During Covid-19”](#) FAACT blog post.
- Find others like you and seek/share support:
 - o Join [FAACT's Parents of High School and College Students with Food Allergies](#) private Facebook group to connect with parents/caregivers in the same position as you or a few years ahead.
 - o Listen to a parent of a current college student share her candid experiences:
 - [Preparing for College Part 1 with Jill Mindlin, JD](#) – FAACT's Roundtable Podcast
 - [Preparing for College Part 2 with Jill Mindlin, JD](#) – FAACT's Roundtable Podcast
 - o You can find FAACT's Roundtable Podcast on [Pandora](#), [Apple Podcast](#), [Spotify](#), [Google Podcast](#), [Stitcher](#), [iHeart Radio](#), [Podcast Chaser](#), [Deezer](#), and [Listen Notes](#).
- Listen to a short podcast featuring a college freshman and a college sophomore living with food allergies: [College Life with Food Allergies](#) on FAACT's Roundtable Podcast.
- Know that you have done a great job. Although your child may not mention it, they have been watching you all these years!

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