



May 19, 2020

Dr. Robert R. Redfield  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Director Redfield,

As members of the food allergy community, we understand and recognize the challenging position that you and your dedicated team face guiding the nation's more than 130,000 schools as they prepare to reopen. While education is firmly rooted in local and state control, we know that many of our nation's school administrators and teachers are looking to the CDC for guidance when it comes to protecting the health of the country's children.

That's why we are writing to share our concern over the CDC's most recent guidance, a decision-tree entitled "[SCHOOLS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC](#)." This document provides high-level guidance for school administrators but is noticeably silent on the health needs of the more than 5.6 million children suffering from life-threatening food allergies. As the CDC has noted, this represents about two children per classroom who are at risk for a severe and potentially life-threatening allergic reaction from food.

As states reopen and school administrators begin planning ahead for the return of students, we request that the CDC remind state and local officials about protecting the lives of food allergic children by embracing and sharing the suggestions we made in our [letter to the CDC](#) dated May 6 and excerpted below:

"Our recommendation would be that in any classroom where there is a food allergic child, to reinforce strict handwashing with soap and water after food contact, disinfecting of surfaces after food contact is made, and blanket "do not share" food policy. Soap and water is preferable to alcohol-based hand sanitizer as the latter has been proven to not remove allergenic proteins from the hand. Data have shown that unintended reactions related to food exposure at school can occur. However, the aforementioned steps are evidence-based recommendations that can help decrease these risks."

We also ask that the CDC add food allergies to the list of health issues cited by the CDC about "[People Who Need to Take Extra Precautions](#)" as food allergies can be a co-morbidity with asthma making reactions even more severe.

We also suggest that prior to school resuming, teachers and school leaders review the written food allergy management plans, such as 504 Plans, for each food allergic child and ensure that those accommodations are being met. In addition, they should refresh their understanding of food allergies, as well as the symptoms of and proper response to food allergic reactions to accommodate the yet undiagnosed children.

Should you have any questions or concerns about our recommendations, please contact Steve Danon, Senior Vice President of External Affairs at FARE (Food Allergy Research and Education) at [SDanon@FoodAllergy.org](mailto:SDanon@FoodAllergy.org) or at (858) 774-1290.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Lisa Gable  
Chief Executive Officer  
FARE

Erin Malawer  
Executive Director  
Allergy Strong

Emily Brown  
Chief Executive Officer  
Food Equality Initiative

Thomas Silvera  
President  
Elijah-Alavi Foundation