Asthma-Free Workplace Resources/Q&A
from October 19th H&S Coordinator Meeting at CCCSIG
Guest Speaker: Debbie Shrem, CA Department of Public Health (contact info on last page)

1.) Information on the Effectiveness of Baby Wipes

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend routine cleaning rather than disinfection for high touch surfaces. Studies have also shown that routinely disinfecting floors offers no greater health protection over routine floor cleaning. Here are two credible references stating that baby wipes can be used effectively for cleaning:

- Washington State Department of Health created a fact sheet, Classroom Cleaning Tips for Teachers and stated, "Rely on Cleaning to Remove Dirt and Germs" and "Fragrance-free baby wipes could be used for quick cleaning."

- The California Department of Public Health's Healthy Cleaning & Asthma-Safer Schools: A How-To Guide, on page 29 states, "If quick classroom touch-up cleaning is needed, a microfiber cloth or unscented baby wipes will suffice and they will not expose staff or students to asthmagens. If disinfectants are needed, notify the custodians who are trained to use them. Children should never be allowed to use wipes with bleach, quaternary ammonium compounds, or glutaraldehyde." Page 30 adds, "Often disinfectant wipes are used when a regular baby wipe would do, like for cleaning up after an art project." Visit: Asthma-Safer Schools Cleaning Guide and Video

2.) Resources to Give Teachers – Triggers for Asthma (e.g., air fresheners)

The School Environmental Health and Asthma Collaborative created a series of Asthma QuickTakes, which are short videos on asthma (reducing indoor air triggers, medication, asthma-safer cleaning, etc). Each QuickTake has a list of relevant fact sheets and other resources. Visit: http://www.sehac.org/aqts

3.) Peanut Allergies

Here's an article about peanut allergies and how they get distributed:

http://www.jacionline.org/article/S0091-6749%2804%2901067-X/fulltext

T.T. Perry, M-K. Conover-Walker, A. Pomés, et al, "Distribution of Peanut Allergen in the Environment." Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology 113, no. 5 (2004): 973–6.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention created a resource, Voluntary Guidelines for Managing Food Allergies In Schools and Early Care and Education Programs.

http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/foodallergies/pdf/13_243135_A_Food_Allergy_Web_508.pdf

Here are some excerpts on cleaning:

State and local health regulations, generally based on the FDA Model Food Code, provide school districts, schools, and ECE programs with requirements governing the cleaning and sanitizing of surfaces and other practices that can protect against the unintentional transfer of residue or trace amount of an

allergic food into another food. Some practices to reduce this cross-contact include the following: (page 38)

° Clean and sanitize with soap and water or all-purpose cleaning agents and sanitizers that meet state and local food safety regulations, all surfaces that come into contact with food in kitchens, classrooms, and other locations where food is prepared or eaten. Cleaning with water alone will not remove food allergens.

Wash all tables and chairs with soap and water or all-purpose cleaning agents before each meal period (Page 43)

4.) "Locker Room" Odors – Green Alternatives to Air Fresheners

The key to having a well-ventilated room is to make sure the ventilation is working properly. Teachers can do their part by ensuring that vents are not blocked and confirm that air is flowing into the room. Adding scents can be harmful, especially for people with asthma. Essential oils are frequently comprised of terpenes. Terpenes combined with ambient ozone can create formaldehyde, which can cause and trigger asthma, and other air pollutants. The Institute of Medicine found that fragrances and secondhand smoke were similar in their association with asthma triggering. Fragrances in cleaning products are actually a combination of many chemicals, some of which contain ingredients that have been associated with dizziness, cancer, endocrine disruption, and asthma.

As a last resort to reduce "locker room" odors, consider using air cleaners with charcoal (carbon) air filters. This would be in the event that the classroom is properly ventilated, and once approved by the school district. Be sure to avoid air cleaners that have ozone. For more information on the California Air Resources Board recommendation, visit:

https://www.arb.ca.gov/research/indoor/aircleaners/air_cleaners_gas_leak.htm

https://www.arb.ca.gov/research/indoor/ozone.htm

The Environmental Protection Agency created Tools for Schools, which has a wealth of information about air quality. Here's a Teacher's Classroom Checklist from Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools | Creating Healthy Indoor Air Quality in Schools | US EPA

Let me know if there are additional questions and how the Cleaning for Asthma-Safe Schools project can further assist the Contra Costa County Schools Insurance Group and its affiliated schools and colleges.

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