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With school back in session, there's no better time to talk about childhood asthma. Millions of children will be heading back into the classroom and struggle with breathing, physical activity and concentration.

The Childhood Asthma Leadership Coalition (CALC) has created this back-to-school toolkit to help you raise awareness of childhood asthma in your community through a variety of engagement tactics.

Included in this toolkit you will find:

- Sample op ed
- Social media tip sheet
- Sample social media content
- Social media graphics

Thanks for all you do in improving children's health outcomes, and please let us know if you have any questions.

The CALC Team

This sample op-ed calls on school administrators and officials to review and update their schoolwide and individual asthma management plans, as well as encourages them to identify and help enroll children without health insurance.

This op-ed should be edited and then submitted to your local newspaper (community newspapers preferred), by a credible local group or individual in your community. This can include a child advocacy organization, a children's health organization/nonprofit, a parent teacher's association, a physician, or a similar voice who has a stake in this issue.

For help submitting this op-ed to a local newspaper, please contact Gabe Vasquez from First Focus at [gabev@firstfocus.org](mailto:gabev@firstfocus.org).

## Back-to-school is the time to review asthma management plans

By **[Your Name, your organization]**

Back to school time can bring out a range of new experiences, emotions, and friendships for kids, but it can also bring negative changes to their health if their asthma is not managed properly in the classroom.

That's why as **[advocates for children/parents/physicians, etc.]**, we encourage all schools in [your city or school district] to conduct a review of their school asthma management plans and work closely with students and their families to ensure they're prepared if a child has an asthma attack at school.

It's clear from the [data](#) that students who suffer from chronic health issues miss the most school and have the lowest graduation rates. Of those chronic health conditions, childhood asthma is one of the greatest contributors to absenteeism. According to the National Asthma Education and Prevention Program, students miss [14 million days of school](#) every year due to asthma. Asthma is the most common chronic condition among school-aged children, affecting more than 6 million American children, or about 8 percent of our nation's youth.

The good news is that in nearly every instance, when a child is given the tools to manage their asthma, they can lead active, productive lives in the classroom and beyond.

Proper asthma management requires a coordinated effort among families, medical providers, and schools. [Evidence shows](#) that for students with asthma or other chronic conditions to be healthy enough to attend school, they first need access to affordable and reliable health coverage. They need medications that stem the onset of symptoms, as well as support at home and in school to understand and adhere to their medication management plan. School health officials, teachers, and administrators



## Childhood Asthma Leadership Coalition

Sample Op Ed

should also work together to develop individual asthma management plans for each student who suffers from childhood asthma.

Access to school health services is an essential piece of the absenteeism puzzle. While schools play a critical role to keep kids healthy, data suggests there's more they can do. In January, the U.S. Departments of Education (DoE) and Health and Human Services (HHS) secretaries wrote a [letter](#) to State School Officers and State Health Officials urging them to take advantage of existing opportunities to screen and enroll eligible children into health coverage and to reimburse schools for the health services they provide.

In addition to reviewing their school's asthma management policy and resources, we urge all school administrators in **[your city/school district]** to follow the advice of the DoE and HHS and take advantage of the opportunity to screen and enroll eligible children into health care.

Now is the time for our schools to continue breaking down the barriers to success and ensure that every student in **[your city/school district]** has a fair opportunity to succeed.

**[Your signature]**

Social media provides a great way to share content and connect with organizations and individuals with an interest or stake in your work. On these social media sites, you create “posts” that are shared with your friends or followers. Sharing interesting content helps you to build up a following. It’s cyclical: the larger your following, the greater the likelihood of your content being viewed and shared; and the more your content gets shared, the bigger your following.

While there are dozens of social media platforms and each has its own practices and rules, we will focus on Facebook and Twitter, two of the most popular. If you are new to social media, there are plenty of great starter resources online to help you get acquainted with [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Here are a few best practices that can improve your use of social media:

**Short and sweet.** Information shared over social media is most effective when it is direct and brief. Facebook and Twitter are not the mediums for complex explanations or in-depth ruminations. Try to get your point across in one or two sentences. Much longer, and you risk losing your audience to the allure of the next post in their content stream.

**Interesting and interactive.** Make sure that your content stands out. Try to create a post that hooks readers and uses interactivity to get them involved. Try linking to other content or asking your followers to share with their own networks. Incorporate images to break up the blocks of text that tend to dominate content streams. And try asking a question from time to time, as a way to encourage viewers to pause and engage with your content. Interesting content is the fastest way to build your social media network.

**In Twitter, use hashtags and tags.** Hashtags are a Twitter concept, using a hash mark (#) to denote words that are quickly searchable within Twitter. As such, this will help you to build up a following of Twitter users interested in your topic. Twitter also allows you to “tag” other users, simply by typing their Twitter “handles” (@First\_Focus, for example) in your posts. Tagging partners when appropriate increases the chances that they will share your content, giving you exposure to networks with similar interests.

**Use images, especially on Facebook.** Facebook’s post chronology “timeline” can be very text-heavy, so take advantage of the opportunity to upload an image or integrate an image from the Web. Using images can make your post stand out, increasing the likelihood that your followers will engage. Try images on Twitter, too.

**Mix up posting times.** As one would expect, different audiences are engaging on social media at different times of day. Content you post in the morning will likely reach a different crowd than those posted at night. For example, while college students might be more active on Facebook and Twitter in the morning, those working 9-5 may not be accessing social media during the day. Spread posts out throughout the day and consider your audience to get the reach you want.

**Don’t be afraid to experiment.** If one of the posts you created did not gain much attention, try changing it up. You might want to turn it into a question, pull out a different fact or quote from the content you are linking to, or post it at a different time. Social media and its audiences are constantly in flux and experimenting with posts can help you to make posts more effective, successful, and reach a wider audience.

Facebook and Twitter are great ways to encourage a community conversation about childhood asthma as students head back to the classroom this fall. To make it easier for you to get started, we have suggested some sample Twitter and Facebook posts below.

These suggestions are based on key facts about the problem and ideas for local and national responses. But they are just suggestions – feel free to customize and adapt these examples for your own use, by inserting local references, replacing the links featured here with links to your own resources, and putting the message in your voice.

### Sample Facebook Posts



[Download](#)



[Download](#)

- Childhood asthma is a real problem that affects one in seven kids. With school back in session, find out how you can take action to manage the effects of asthma and support the kids in your life affected by this disease: <http://ow.ly/WQld303IVdE>. #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- How does your community measure up on #ChildhoodAsthma management? Search by state: <http://ow.ly/w3wX303IVg5> #InvestInKids
- What's the connection between #childhoodasthma and allergies? A lot, as it turns out: <http://ow.ly/pPfp303IVjj> #AsthmaAwareness #InvestInKids
- Educators and administrators can play a critical role in helping students with #ChildhoodAsthma. Know how to step in if a child is having trouble breathing: <http://ow.ly/iRub303IVmq> #AsthmaAwareness #InvestInKids
- Students miss 14 million days of school every year due to asthma. Thankfully, Congress took action this year to support asthma education: <http://ow.ly/rQcp303IVsS> #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids

**Sample Twitter Posts**

- One in seven kids is affected by asthma. We can change that. Get help here: <http://ow.ly/jvTm303ISWn>. #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- Meet the Childhood Asthma Leadership Coalition. <http://ow.ly/DmzH303IT1m>. Add your name: <http://ow.ly/TNO9303IT4o>. #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- [FACT SHEET] Using Medicaid to get reimbursed for pediatric asthma services: <http://ow.ly/xImj303ITaI> #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- Have kids with #asthma back in school? Make an action plan for their health: <http://ow.ly/zl86303ITfH> #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- Parents: Have your kids taken the @ACAAI asthma relief test? Your kids don't have to suffer. <http://ow.ly/1F3T303ITjU> #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- #ChildhoodAsthma can be managed. Create a plan so your kids can sleep better, stay in school and continue being active: <http://ow.ly/kHAK303IUz> #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- #Childhoodasthma shouldn't hold kids back. Create a management plan so kids can thrive: <http://ow.ly/kHAK303IUz> #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- Keeps your kids thriving in their activities. Talk with a coach or gym teacher to manage #childhoodasthma symptoms: <http://ow.ly/5tzK303IUTX> #ChildhoodAsthma #InvestInKids
- Get the latest on #ChildhoodAsthma: follow @ChildHealth\_USA on Twitter. #BackToSchool