

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.

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

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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]