How Much Do You Disclose to the School about your Child’s Medications?

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Parents of children with a disability often question how much information they should share with their school district, especially related to their child’s medications. It is a vulnerable position to be in and it is important to disclose enough to get the support they need, while at the same time, trying to protect their child’s privacy.

Legally speaking, parents are not obligated to disclose their child’s medications to school personnel. Regardless of whether a child takes medication, schools are obligated to provide an appropriate program and placement which offers the child the opportunity to make meaningful educational progress. This concept is known as a Free Appropriate Public Education, i.e. FAPE. Schools are not permitted to require children to take medications to treat a disability. Schools will often suggest to parents that their child would benefit from medications; however, schools are required to program for a child’s disability regardless of pharmaceutical intervention.

Generally speaking, it is advisable to share with pertinent district personnel any medication your child is taking. Children spend the majority of the day in school. Thus, feedback from those who see the child on a daily basis can be useful information. Medications often have various side effects which teachers and staff should be made aware. Additionally, the efficacy of a prescribed medication can be more appropriately assessed with teacher and staff feedback. Furthermore, parents likely want to know if changes in medication are affecting the child in the school setting and the only way to be made aware is to work collaboratively with the district.

There are federal laws in place to protect a disabled child’s privacy. Schools are generally not permitted to disclose information about a child’s disability including medications the child may be taking. Thus, it is advisable to disclose to school personnel pertinent medications a child may taking so that parents and school district personnel can work collaboratively in affording the child an appropriate education while at the same protecting the child’s right to privacy.