

POLICY
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

LATEX-FREE POLICY

Guiding Principle

Rhode Island School for the Deaf is committed to the safety and health of all students and employees. In accordance with this and pursuant to Rhode Island General Laws §§16-21-31 and 16-21-32, the purpose of this policy is to: provide a safe and healthy learning environment for students with allergies; reduce the likelihood of severe or potentially life-threatening allergic reactions; ensure a rapid and effective response in the case of a severe or potentially life-threatening allergic reaction; and protect the rights of allergic students to participate in all school activities.

Purpose

We have students and staff at RI School for the Deaf who are severely allergic to latex. Rhode Island School for the Deaf is committed to reducing, to a reasonably practicable extent, the exposure of its students, employees and visitors to latex in the school environment. The purpose of this latex sensitive policy is to avoid severe, life threatening allergic reactions in the school setting.

Definitions and Background Information

Latex refers to the natural rubber content in a product. These products contain particles (latex proteins) which when touched or inhaled create an allergic reaction within a latex sensitive individual. Latex allergies have dramatically increased during the last decade. This increase can be directly attributed to the increased use of latex products (especially gloves and balloons). Latex balloons are very common, and efforts to protect food servers, caregivers and consumers from harmful pathogens have precipitated the use of latex gloves.

The symptoms of a latex allergy can vary from mild to severe and occur after exposure to a latex product or the latex protein on a surface or in the air. The symptoms of a latex allergy may include: hives, runny nose, sneezing, headaches, itchy eyes, sore or hoarse voice, abdominal cramping, chest tightness, wheezing or shortness of breath (asthma), shock, and or anaphylaxis.

Anaphylaxis is an acute allergic reaction that affects more than one system of the body. It is a life-threatening event. If someone exhibits difficulty breathing, a drop in blood pressure, or symptoms in more than one body system (cutaneous, respiratory,

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gastrointestinal, or cardiovascular) after possible exposure to an allergen, it should be considered anaphylaxis. Medical attention and treatment should be sought immediately.

Policy

Wherever possible, Rhode Island School for the Deaf shall provide an environment that is as latex-free as possible for employees and students. No latex gloves, latex balloons, or latex gym or play equipment shall be used

Because there are staff and students at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf with a medically documented allergy to latex, there are no latex gloves used on the premises, sterile or non-sterile. Latex-free and powder-free gloves will be provided in all nursing, athletics, and cafeteria areas. All disposable gloves used in the health room, first aid kits, classrooms, cafeteria, audiology center, maintenance, and athletics are non-latex. All gloves to be used at the school will be ordered through the front office to provide oversight and compliance with this policy.

If an occasion arises where no replacement is available and a latex product must be used, the Director shall post a warning notice in the school facility. The notice shall be posted in English, Spanish, and other languages deemed appropriate by the Director and shall be printed in bold letters that are at least 3/8th of an inch high.

This notice shall alert students, employees and the public

- (1) That natural rubber latex gloves are being used,
- (2) That exposure to latex may result in the development of an allergy,
- (3) That allergic reactions to natural rubber latex can cause skin rash, hives, nasal and eye irritation, asthma, and shock; and
- (4) that persons who experience allergic reaction symptoms, should contact their health care provider.

In accordance with [RI Gen. Laws §23-73-1 et seq.](#) and Rhode Island Department of Health regulations, the RI School for the Deaf cafeteria or other food service establishments shall utilize disposable gloves, whether sterile or non-sterile.

RISDeaf is a latex-free school, therefore all disposable gloves used FOR FOOD SERVICE shall also be **latex-free**.

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This policy replaces a prior policy regarding latex gloves approved on 6/5/12.

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Reference

[RI Gen. Laws § 23-73-1 et. seq.](#)

[Rhode Island Department of Health Regulations Pertaining to the Use of Latex Gloves Model Notice](#)

1st Reading - June 2, 2015

2nd Reading - July 7, 2015

Adopted August 7, 2015