Illinois changes rules for inhalers in school

By Kathryn Tormey
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A new Illinois law makes it easier for students to carry asthma inhalers with them in school.

Illinois students and parents can breathe a little easier this school year, thanks to a new law that makes it less difficult for students to keep lifesaving asthma medication with them.

It is estimated that 9.4 percent, or about 7 million, of American children have asthma. The condition can be potentially life-threatening without immediate access to inhalers.

HB 5836 stems from a 2001 law in Illinois that gave students the ability to keep asthma inhalers with them at all times (prior to the law, they might have to had keep inhalers in the nurse’s office).

Under the law, students had to obtain a yearly doctor’s note. Parents and advocates say that requirement was a barrier because it would sometimes require a separate doctor’s visit or a phone call to the child’s physician.

Under HB 5836, a student needs only a copy of the prescription and a note from his or her guardian. State officials believe the law is the first of its kind in the nation, according to the Chicago Tribune.

With passage this year of a law in South Dakota, all Midwestern states now allow children to carry and self-administer asthma medication, according to the Allergy and Asthma Network Mothers of Asthmatics.

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