Tracy Milligan didn’t want her 4-year-old son, Jared, to be forced into a “diabetes school.” Jared had been diagnosed with type 1 almost a year before he was due to start kindergarten, and because of his age, it was clear he would need help at school caring for his diabetes. In Jacksonville, Fla., where the Milligans live, this would have meant Jared couldn’t attend his neighborhood school but would have to catch a bus to one designated for students with diabetes, where a full-time nurse was on staff. In other words, Jared wasn’t welcome in 98 of the Duval County school district’s 103 elementary schools. In the Milligans’ case, the only way around the transfer was for a parent to come to Jared’s elementary school to give him insulin shots. So that’s what his mom did.

Every day for 2½ years, Milligan, an administrator at a nearby research center, drove from her office to Chets Creek Elementary to give Jared his insulin before lunch and when his blood glucose levels ran high. She missed important conferences, meetings, and business trips. If she couldn’t make it, her husband had to take a vacation day from work to fill in. Milligan didn’t want the school policy to push Jared into trying to manage his own diabetes before he...
was ready, but the choice wasn’t easy. “As much as I wanted to keep him in the school and as important as that was to us, it was a great challenge, and emotionally and physically a very difficult time for us,” she says.

Jared is 8 now and can do most of his own routine care, such as administering insulin. But other kids like him will benefit from legislation that American Diabetes Association advocates like his mom worked hard to enact this year. On July 1, Florida Gov. Charlie Crist signed into law a bill that ends segregation of children with diabetes by forbidding districts from assigning kids like Jared to a particular school just because they have diabetes. The new law also enables students who are capable of doing so to carry diabetes supplies and use them on their own, and allows trained school staff such as teachers, administrators, and others to provide diabetes care.

Diabetes is nothing new, of course, so why are laws on school diabetes care now needed in some states? “Thirty years ago, we didn’t know we needed to manage diabetes 24 hours a day,” says Larry Deeb, MD, a pediatric endocrinologist, former ADA president for medicine and science, and currently a cochair of ADA’s Safe at School working group. “We didn’t have the means to manage diabetes 24 hours a day, so we didn’t.”

The evolution of new technologies and the proven benefits of tight blood glucose control mean that schools must be well prepared to provide care to keep children with diabetes safe in the short term and avoid the devastating...
complications of diabetes down the road. ADA volunteers and staff have led the fight for adequate diabetes care in school. ADA’s Safe at School campaign provides families with the tools they need to educate school personnel about diabetes, negotiate resolutions to problems, and, when necessary, take legal action or even change the laws.

Paula Jameson, MSN, ARNP, CDE, a diabetes educator and nurse practitioner at Nemours Children’s Clinic in Orlando and advocacy chair for ADA in central Florida, says she has already seen improvements in how Florida schools treat students with diabetes. Thanks to the work of her clinic and ADA, the Orange County (Fla.) school district wrote diabetes management plans for each student, including strategies for training volunteer staff in how to perform tasks like administering insulin. “Nurses can’t be everywhere at once, and I truly believe that [these changes] have made all the difference in the world in the quality of care these kids get at school,” says Jameson.

Children with diabetes in New Jersey are also safer at school thanks to the work of ADA advocates. A new law that took effect in January requires schools to create individualized care plans for every student with diabetes and provides for the education of school employees in diabetes care, including training staff members who volunteer to give a glucagon shot in the event of severely low blood glucose. It also allows kids who are able to do so to self-manage their diabetes.

That last provision was especially important to Kenny Rodenheiser, who testified in favor of the legislation. Rodenheiser, now 20 and a college junior, was a seventh grader in Hammonton, N.J., when he was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes.

FOR MORE information about diabetes care at school or to request help from a legal advocate, call ADA’s Center for Information and Community Support at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or go to diabetes.org/safeatschool.

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A year after launching its Stop Diabetes movement, the American Diabetes Association is calling on people to take part in a new way—by making videos.

To mark American Diabetes Month in November, the Association is holding a “Share Your Vision to Stop Diabetes” video contest. Participants can create a 30-second video incorporating the upraised palm (bottom left) that is the symbol of the Stop Diabetes movement, and post the submission to stopdiabetes.com on or before November 30. The three winners of the contest, which is sponsored by VSP Vision Care, will each receive an Apple iPad, and one will appear in a Stop Diabetes public service announcement. To get complete rules and to view sample videos, visit stopdiabetes.com and click on “Share.”

“We hope that the videos will demonstrate the seriousness of this disease,” says Lois Witkop, senior vice president of marketing communications for ADA. “Many members of the general public don’t view diabetes as a life-threatening disease. They’re surprised when we tell them that, in fact, diabetes kills more people than any other disease.”

Michelle Laranko, RN, CDE, a pediatric diabetes educator at Children’s Regional Hospital in Camden, N.J., also backed the diabetes care bill. After she was diagnosed with type 1 at age 12, Laranko recalls a math teacher repeatedly embarrassing her in front of the whole class for having snacks to keep her blood glucose steady. To avoid being ridiculed, Laranko soon skipped snacking. Under the new law, training for care of students with diabetes must be given to any teachers, coaches, bus drivers, and other school personnel who volunteer to receive it. Laranko testified at the legislature in favor of a provision that allows school employees to administer glucagon should a student lose consciousness. She explained the importance of an emergency glucagon shot and demonstrated the four-step process. She says legislators were surprised by how simple it was.

Anthony Cannon, MD, president of the Philadelphia-area ADA Community Leadership Board, says that schools want to partner with parents to provide the best possible care for students and that diabetes education is vital in making that happen. “Teachers are interested in learning more and doing more for their students,” he says. Cannon adds that the New Jersey law is helping children achieve the best possible management of their diabetes: “It allows youth the freedom to be as engaged with their chronic disease at school as they would be in their homes.”

There are many ways to join the movement:

- **Share** your story at stopdiabetes.com, where you can take the pledge to Stop Diabetes and spread the word to friends and family.
- **Act** to promote healthier living and bring attention to diabetes by attending a Diabetes EXPO (diabetes.org/expo).
- **Learn** more about diabetes on I Decide to Stop Diabetes Day, an educational program for African Americans at community churches on November 14.
- **Give** of your time and resources with your cell phone, by texting “ACT” to 25383 throughout the month of November to make a $10 donation to ADA. You can also join the movement by texting “JOIN” to 69866, which will sign you up to receive free text messages about diabetes during November.

**What Are You Doing To Stop Diabetes?**

**Stop** Diabetes. American Diabetes Association.