

Criteria for allergy-friendly boarding schools

BACKGROUND

30 million people in Germany suffer from allergies, which corresponds to about one third of the population. This figure also applies to students. Untreated allergic rhinitis in students can lead to a 30% decrease in performance. This can result in test scores that are lower by up to an entire grade point.

The aim of the ECARF Seal for allergy-friendly boarding schools is to improve the school environment for students with allergies by ensuring that the needs of allergy sufferers are addressed.

The ECARF Seal of Quality certifies that a boarding school has made uncomplicated and practical adjustments to accommodate students with allergies. Although public areas such as an auditorium or dining room can never be completely allergy-free, compliance with the ECARF criteria significantly improves the environment and quality of life for students with allergies.

1. CRITERIA

1.1. Environment

- The people in charge are aware of allergies and are able to accommodate the needs of students with allergies without isolating them.
- The boarding school's first aid kit is stocked with the newer antihistamine tablets (e.g. cetirizine) and an adrenaline injector with a valid shelf life.
- The staff receives training with the appropriate training material to handle allergy emergencies.
- Teachers, caregivers, kitchen staff and, if applicable, healthcare workers will receive training from ECARF experts on dealing with students with allergies. Training is repeated every two years.

1.2. Interiors

Public areas/classrooms

- No allergenic green plants that release pollen (no flowering grasses, hazel or birch branches or olive plants. In particular, self-pollinating plants release pollen and spread them throughout interiors. However, certain allergenic plants such as violets or ficus benjamina only cause problems when they come into direct contact with the skin and therefore need not necessarily be removed in every circumstance.) Respiratory allergy sufferers may experience symptoms when they come into contact with animals or animal hair.
- Ventilation of rooms through open windows or externally monitored air conditioners and ventilation systems according to manufacturer's guidelines, including regular filter changes

- Smoke-free and pet-free environment

Rooms

Rooms available with the following amenities:

- Smoking/pet-free rooms available
- No allergenic plants that release pollen (in general, no flowering grasses, hazel or birch branches or olive plants)
- Potted plants only in soil-less systems (hydroculture) to reduce mould contamination
- Uncarpeted floor surfaces that are cleaned daily with a dust re-emission class A vacuum cleaner (in accordance with the EU energy label) or a vacuum cleaner equipped with a HEPA class H13 filter (dust/mite reduction). Floor surfaces are wet mopped every two days OR short-pile carpeting is cleaned daily with a dust re-emission class A vacuum cleaner (in accordance with the EU energy label) or a vacuum cleaner equipped with a HEPA class H13 filter
- Window ventilation or quality controlled air conditioning (see public areas)
- **If possible:**
 - Room cleaning using hypoallergenic cleaning agents
 - Laundering using hypoallergenic detergents

1.3. Meals

The meals of the students and the staff must be adapted to the needs of people with allergies. To do this, a functioning allergen management system must be established and adequate alternatives must be provided.

Allergen management

Food purchasing and preparation

Allergens can also end up unintentionally in food, for example, if the raw ingredients contain hidden allergens or the same transport container has been used for allergen-free and allergen-containing raw ingredients. Allergenic contamination can also occur when the same machines or utensils (e.g. knives) have been used to prepare allergen-free and allergen-containing meals.

Allergenic contamination can be prevented through effective allergen management. This includes:

- Monitoring the raw ingredients
- Monitoring the food preparation process
- Organised staff training

The kitchen staff should therefore ensure through allergen management that ...

- Products are always individually packaged and delivered in separate transport containers; this should be specified when ordering the products
- Food items are always individually packaged, covered and stored.
- Meals containing allergens are prepared in a separate working area.
- The kitchen staff changes latex-free gloves or washes hands before entering the separate working area.
- To prevent cross contamination, kitchen utensils never come into contact with other food items or dishes before or during meal preparation.
- Prepared food is portioned out using separate kitchen utensils for each individual meal component.
- The kitchen staff is regularly trained to prevent allergenic contamination when storing, preparing and serving food and to answer questions.
- A list of all allergenic ingredients is accessible to the staff and guests at all times so that they can always be informed about the composition of all dishes.

Labelling of allergenic meals

Information on allergenic ingredients used in the meals is accessible at all times.

The following major allergens must be labelled for the meals provided:

The 14 allergens subject to mandatory labelling by law (EU regulation no. 1169/2011):

- Cereals containing gluten, such as wheat, rye, barley, oats, spelt, Khorasan wheat or hybrid varieties thereof and products thereof
- Nuts, specifically almond, hazelnut, walnut, cashew, pecan nut, Brazil nut, pistachio nut, macadamia nut and products thereof
- Eggs and egg products
- Peanuts and peanut products
- Soya and soya products
- Mustard and mustard products
- Crustaceans and crustacean products
- Fish and fish products
- Milk and dairy products (including lactose)
- Celery and celery products
- Sulphur dioxide and sulphites at a concentration higher than 10 mg/kg or 10 mg/l, labelled as SO₂
- Sesame seeds and sesame seed products

- Lupin and lupin products
- Molluscs and mollusc products

Alternative foods

Upon registering at boarding school, information about food intolerances is collected for each child.

If necessary, meals are adapted to exclude any specific ingredients to be avoided, and alternative meal and foods are provided accordingly, e.g.

- egg-free durum wheat spaghetti or pasta, semolina , rice, potatoes
- Soya milk
- Lactose-free milk
- Dairy-free, egg-free and nut-free desserts
- Gluten-free bread
- Nut-free, peanut-free and almond-free muesli and bread

1.4. Training

As part of the certification, staff will be trained to deal with students who suffer from allergies.

1.5. Validity

ECARF certification is valid for two years. During the term, the ECARF Audit must be granted access to monitoring inspections at any time without prior notice. The inspection is carried out by internal auditors or authorised ECARF partners.

1.6. External Presentation of the ECARF Seal of Quality

- Information about allergy friendliness can be presented in the design of the establishment but must bear the ECARF Seal of Quality logo.
- The information should be presented to the public as a stand-up display in German and English as well as on the operator's website.

Information in the food service area

- Buffet
"If you have any allergies, our staff will be happy to help."
The ECARF Seal of Quality logo is placed beside this notice.
- In addition, the following notice must be prominently placed:
"Please only handle the food using the serving utensil that is provided for each individual dish. Do not mix the different foods."



2. QUALITY CONTROL AND COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

The operator has established a functional system of quality control that effectively documents, responds and follows up complaints. The system ensures the following:

- The operator's contact details, such as telephone number and/or email address, are documented;
- Complaints are handled and followed up in an appropriate manner by qualified and experienced personnel of the operator;
- The assessment of complaints and, if applicable, any inferred areas of improvement are integrated into product quality and safety. The operator agrees to make this data available to ECARF on an ongoing basis.