

School-Based Cardiac Emergency Response Plan

School administrators are faced with numerous responsibilities on a daily basis—school operations, instructional leadership, managing parent and community expectations and, of course, student safety on campus.

Student safety includes ensuring every school adopts a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan and continually reviews and improves upon the plan.

In 2013, the American Heart Association reported 9,500 cases of out-of-hospital cardiac arrest in youths. Jonathan Fussell was one of those cases. His life was saved in his high school by two staff who rushed to his aid while he lay dying in cardiac arrest.

Prompt response saves lives.

Across the United States, even the best emergency medical services (EMS) systems can't reach cardiac arrest victims for 3 to 5 minutes. Therefore, **the actions taken by bystanders during the first few minutes of a cardiac emergency are critical.**

Prompt action can double or triple a victim's chance of survival.

At Bixby High School, school staff members Josh Smith and Roland Vernon were prepared to act swiftly and confidently when their student Jonathan Fussell went into cardiac arrest. Their school had a cardiac emergency action plan, and that very plan saved Jonathan's life.

What is a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan?

A Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP) is a written document that establishes specific steps to take action in a cardiac emergency in a school setting.

Essential elements include establishing an effective communication system; training anticipated responders in CPR and automated external defibrillator (AED) use; obtaining access to an AED for early defibrillation; acquiring the necessary emergency equipment; coordinating and integrating on-site responder and AED programs with the local EMS system; and practicing and reviewing the response plan.*

Your team of experts

In 2015, the American Heart Association assembled a task force composed of members from more than 10 national health and safety organizations† to create a response plan template based on science and best practices. The template is free for any school to use and implement.

Why is it important?

A carefully orchestrated response to cardiac emergencies will reduce deaths in school settings and help ensure that chaos does not lead to an improper or inadequate response. Preparation is the essential key to saving lives.

Download the CERP today!

The CERP template and implementation resources are free for any school to download at www.heart.org/CERP.

We encourage schools to connect locally or nationally with the listed organizations to enhance their CPR and AED programs, because these organizations may have additional programs or resources to help with planning and implementation. Visit www.heart.org/CERP today.

*Drezner JA, Rao AL, Heistand J, et al. Effectiveness of emergency response planning for sudden cardiac arrest in United States high schools with automated external defibrillators. *Circulation*. 2009;120(6):518-525. doi: 10.1161/CIRCULATIONAHA.109.855890.

†The CERP Task Force member listing is at www.heart.org/CERP in the "Partner Organizations" document.