

AED Access & Readiness Considerations

Why AED Accessibility Matters

Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) is a life-threatening emergency that occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating. It strikes people of all ages who may seem to be healthy, even children and teens. When SCA happens, the person collapses and doesn't respond or breathe normally. They may gasp or shake as if having a seizure. SCA leads to death in minutes if the person does not get help right away.

Survival depends on people nearby calling 911, starting CPR, and using an AED as soon as possible. AED effectiveness depends entirely on how quickly it can be accessed and used.

The information below offers practical considerations for improving emergency preparedness and rapid response to sudden cardiac arrest.

Accessibility & Placement

AEDs are most effective when they are:

- Easy to locate
- Clearly visible
- Accessible without delay

Avoid placement in:

- Locked offices or rooms
- Storage areas requiring keys
- Locations dependent on specific personnel being present

AEDs should be strategically placed near:

- Main hallways and entry points
- Gymnasiums and fitness areas
- Athletic fields and stadiums
- Cafeterias and gathering spaces
- Auditoriums or event venues

For larger campuses or complexes, multiple AEDs may be necessary to support rapid response.

An AED should ideally be retrieved and applied within approximately 3 minutes of collapse.



Signage & Awareness

AED locations should be:

- Clearly marked
- Easily visible from a distance

Staff, visitors, volunteers, and community members should know/be able to quickly identify where AEDs are located.





Training & Preparedness

CPR and AED training help build confidence and readiness across the community.

Training can benefit:

- Employees and staff
- Coaches and athletic personnel
- Teachers and school staff
- Volunteers and event staff
- Community members and students

Anyone should be able to retrieve and utilize an AED if needed in a sudden cardiac arrest emergency. They provide step-by-step voice prompts and are designed for use by the public.

Maintenance & Emergency Planning

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AED programs should include:

- Regular device checks
- Battery and pad replacement schedules
- Compliance with local/state registration requirements

Organizations should maintain a written Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP) that outlines how to activate EMS/911, response roles, emergency access procedures and protocols during an emergency. This plan should be reviewed and practiced regularly to ensure an effective and coordinated response when every second matters.



AED Registration & Emergency Systems Integration

Where available, AEDs should be registered with local EMS systems and/or the PulsePoint AED registry app so they can be identified quickly during emergencies.

Many communities integrate AED locations into:

- Local EMS or 911 dispatch systems
- State AED registries
- Public access platforms such as the PulsePoint AED **app**

This ensures AEDs are not only maintained, but also visible and accessible to emergency responders and the public when every second matters.

PulsePoint AED Registry app & PulsePoint Repond app are both available for **download**.



Common Barriers to Consider

Organizations may unintentionally create delays by:

- Storing AEDs in locked locations
- Limiting access to select personnel
- Placing AEDs far from activity areas
- Failing to clearly mark AED locations
- Not considering evening, weekend, or community use/access of facilities

The goal is to reduce barriers and support the fastest possible response during a sudden cardiac arrest emergency.

Quick AED Access Check

Consider the following questions:

- Can someone locate the AED quickly during an emergency?
- Can it be accessed without needing a key?
- Is the location clearly marked with signage?
- Can it be reached quickly during events?
- Is the AED accessible during evenings, weekends, or community use?
- Would a visitor or first-time guest know where to find it?
- Is there a plan for regularly checking the AED?
- Has the organization practiced its emergency response plan?

If not, there may be opportunities to improve accessibility and emergency readiness.



Key Takeaways

AEDs save lives when they are:

- Immediately accessible without delay
- Clearly visible, well-marked, and easy to locate
- Supported by widespread awareness and confidence to act
- Properly maintained and ready to function at all times

Immediate CPR and early defibrillation can **double or triple survival from sudden cardiac arrest**. For every minute defibrillation is delayed, survival decreases by approximately **10%**.

When an AED is used within the first minute, survival rates have been reported as high as **90% in some public-access settings**.

Every improvement—reducing delays, improving visibility, and strengthening awareness—can make the difference between life and death when every second counts.



Resources

CPR & AED Training Information

- Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation: www.sca-aware.org
- CallPushShock.org
- Local Training Options: Check with local fire departments, EMS agencies, or community centers for in-person CPR/AED training opportunities. CPR/AED training is also available locally through national organizations such as American Red Cross, HSI and the American Heart Association.

AED Registration

- Download the PulsePoint AED app (App Store or Google Play) or visit AED.new

Preparedness Support

- SCAF Partners in Preparedness Program: The Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation collaborates with trusted industry partners to offer exclusive discounts on AEDs, CPR training, and emergency response solutions: www.sca-aware.org/about-sudden-cardiac-arrest/partners-in-preparedness
- Smart Hearts Sports Coalition AEDs for Youth Program: www.smartheartsports.com/aeds-for-youth

Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP) Guidance & Planning Resources

- American Heart Association: cpr.heart.org/en/resources/cardiac-emergency-response-plan
- Project ADAM: <https://projectadamheart.org>
- Parent Heart Watch: <https://parentheartwatch.org/resources/sca-prevention/cardiac-emergency-response-plan/>

For any questions that might arise, feel free to contact the Sudden Cardiac Arrest Foundation:

info@sca-aware.org



Disclaimer

This document is intended for general educational and preparedness purposes only and does not constitute medical, legal, or regulatory advice. AED laws, placement requirements, registration processes, and emergency response protocols may vary by state or local jurisdiction. Organizations should consult applicable laws, local EMS agencies, medical advisors, and qualified professionals when developing or implementing AED and emergency response programs.