



What Every AED Program Manager Should Know

9 DO'S AND DON'TS

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Automated external defibrillators (AEDs) help save lives. But managing a holistic AED program involves much more than just buying an AED; it takes time and effort from a dedicated program manager.

To ensure that each AED is ready to use at a moment's notice, for example, it must have working batteries and pads that are within their expiration dates. All potential responders must also be trained in CPR and AED use.

Setting up a program that provides a system of care – from pre-event preparedness to rescue response and post-event support – will enable your organisation to be ready for an unexpected sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) emergency and to help to save lives when every minute counts.

Here are nine mistakes and best practices to keep in mind when implementing a holistic AED program management system.

1

Don't consider your AED program a short-term project.

Setting up an AED program is like investing: It pays to have a long-term perspective.

It's easy to think that your AED program is complete after your AEDs are installed and your volunteer rescuers are trained. Not so – an effective AED program needs a manager with a long-term perspective. Consider how long AEDs will remain in place before your organisation decides to replace them. Five years? Ten or more? How often will you provide training? Who will manage the replacement of pads and batteries over the life of the AED?

Rescuing a victim of SCA happens in just a few minutes. Those few minutes require long-term preparation and readiness.

2

Don't forget to focus on training.

Ensuring your responders are trained in AED use and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) is critical to help save a life before EMS arrives.

A successful rescue depends on bystanders accurately applying the AED pads, providing high-quality CPR, and following the prompts of the AED. Even the most inexperienced responders will have the presence of mind and confidence to act quickly and decisively if they are properly trained and supported. Plan to train your rescuers regardless of how easy your AED is to use.

3

Don't underestimate the importance of high-quality CPR.

The latest Guidelines from the American Heart Association (AHA) and the European Resuscitation Council (ERC) both emphasise the importance of high-quality CPR in improving outcomes from sudden cardiac arrest.

All of your rescuers should understand and be able to provide high-quality CPR, during which chest compressions are consistently 2-2.4 inches/5-6 cm deep and delivered at a rate of 100-120 per minute.

Remember, AEDs don't replace CPR; they augment it. If no shock is advised after the AED performs its first heart analysis, only high-quality CPR can assist the heart in developing a shockable rhythm.

4

Do be sure to explain why CPR and AED training is so important.

It's always easier to remember WHAT to do and HOW to do it if you know WHY you are doing it. This is especially true for AED/CPR training.

Make sure the instructors who train your rescuers teach them WHY CPR is required (even when an AED is present) – not just HOW to do it.

Communicate three lifesaving benefits of CPR:

- **Providing oxygenated blood to the heart.** This is the most important thing CPR does for a victim who has just received a shock. Think of trying to start a car: Even if its electrical system is fine, it will not start if it has no gas. Similarly, the heart cannot resume beating without blood.
- **Providing oxygenated blood to the brain.** Even when a victim survives SCA, brain damage can severely impair their quality of life. CPR helps to minimise brain damage by keeping the brain supplied with blood for a longer period of time.
- **Evacuating blood that collects in the heart.** If a victim is unresponsive for more than four minutes without receiving CPR, their heart will become swollen with blood. This happens because during this time the veins continue to deliver blood to the heart, but the arteries no longer work to move it throughout the body. Even if the distended heart is shockable, the shock won't be effective if blood is not evacuated to restore the heart to its normal size. This can only be done by providing at least one minute of chest compressions prior to shocking the heart.

5

Do proactively schedule and track the training of your rescuers.

Once your program is underway, it's important to plan how you will maintain rescue-readiness in your organisation. AED program management tools make this easy with modules that keep track of which responders are fully trained, when they were trained, and when they are due for re-training. The best program management software can help track responder training and certifications as well as provide notifications when training needs to be renewed.

6

Do make sure to train everyone to recognize the signs of SCA and understand how to respond.

It is not always possible to train all employees, but you can make sure they all know how to recognise SCA and begin taking action immediately.

- **Recognise the signs:** Teach everyone – through e-mails, memos, or even brief training sessions – how to recognise the signs of sudden cardiac arrest, what your AEDs look like, and where they are located.
- **Locate trained responders:** Publicise who in your facility has been trained in CPR and the use of an AED. All telephone operators, receptionists, HR, and security personnel should have an up-to-date list of all those who are currently trained.
- **Call for help.** If someone collapses, make sure every employee is prepared to immediately call emergency services.



- **Get the AED:** Employees should know that they should quickly retrieve the nearest AED and locate at least one trained person to assist the rescue.
- **Begin CPR:** Encourage everyone who witnesses a collapse to begin CPR compressions on the victim's chest as soon as possible, even before the arrival of the AED or a fully trained rescuer.

7

Don't forget to replace pads and batteries over the life of your AED program.

Accessories need to be replaced regularly to ensure your AED is ready for a rescue.

Electrode pads typically have a shelf life of two to five years. Depending on your AED, batteries may need to be replaced as often as every year, or they may last as long as five years. When calculating the total cost of ownership for your AED, consider the logistics and cost of maintenance and accessory replacements.

Also, be sure to identify who will manage consumable replacement and device readiness. You might also consider an online management system to help streamline the process, reduce your employees' time and effort, and provide the peace of mind that your organisation will be ready to help save a life.

8

Do keep rescue accessories with your AED.

Once your facility is equipped with AEDs and responders are fully trained, it is important to also provide some accessories to help in an emergency:

- A pair of scissors for cutting off clothing
- A large absorbent paper towel to clean a victim's chest prior to attaching electrode pads
- A razor for shaving hair if necessary to ensure adequate contact with electrode pads
- A pair of rubber gloves to protect responders
- A barrier mask for optional rescue breathing during CPR

Many AED providers and manufacturers offer rescue accessory packages that can be kept with every AED. Consider purchasing these kits along with your AEDs to better support responders when a life is at stake.

9

Don't underestimate the psychological effects of a medical emergency.

Implementing an AED program is like buying life insurance: Having it brings peace of mind, but you hope you'll never need to use it.

Realistically, the more employees your organisation has, the more likely it is that an unexpected medical event could occur. If it does, how will it affect the people in your organisation?

It's likely that many people will know both the victim and the responders – and everyone involved will be affected deeply by the event. If the people in your organisation are well-trained and well-equipped, the victim's chance of survival is significantly greater. But whatever the outcome, your program should reflect the fact that the people in your organisation – including you, as program manager – did all they could to proactively prepare and respond to help save a life.





SYSTEMS **SAVE LIVES**

When it comes to sudden cardiac arrest, having an AED is part of a holistic system of care that includes equipment, program management, and post-event support. This system will ensure your community and responders are ready to act with confidence and help save lives – when every minute counts.

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