



AED Programs Q&A



Heartsaver®

What's public access to defibrillation?

Public access to defibrillation (PAD) means providing access to AEDs in public and/or private places.

What is an AED?

The automated external defibrillator (AED) is an electronic medical device. An AED can check a person's heart rhythm. It can recognize a rhythm that requires a shock. And it can advise the rescuer when a shock is needed. The AED uses voice prompts, lights and text messages to tell the rescuer the steps to take.

AEDs are very accurate and easy to use. With training, anyone can learn to operate an AED safely. There are many different brands of AEDs, but the same basic steps apply to all of them. The AHA does not recommend a specific model.

What's the AHA position on placement of AEDs?

The AHA strongly advocates that all EMS first-response vehicles and ambulances be equipped with an AED or another defibrillation device (semiautomatic or manual defibrillator). The AHA also supports placing AEDs in targeted public areas such as sports arenas, gated communities, office complexes, doctor's offices, shopping malls, etc. When AEDs are placed in the community or a business or facility, the AHA strongly encourages that they be part of a defibrillation program in which:

- Persons that acquire an AED notify the local EMS office.
- A licensed physician or medical authority provides medical oversight to ensure quality control.
- Persons responsible for using the AED are trained in CPR and how to use an AED.

Why is notifying the local EMS office important?

It's important for the local EMS system to know where AEDs are located in the community. In the event of a sudden cardiac arrest emergency, the 9-1-1 dispatcher will know if an AED is on the premises and will be able to notify the EMS system as well as the responders already on the scene.

Why should a licensed physician or medical authority be involved with purchasers of AEDs?

This is a quality control mechanism. The licensed physician or medical authority will ensure that all designated responders are properly trained and that the AED is properly maintained. He or she also can help establishments develop an emergency response plan for the AED program.

Why should people who are responsible for operating an AED receive CPR training?

Early CPR is an integral part of providing lifesaving aid to people suffering sudden cardiac arrest. CPR helps to circulate oxygen-rich blood to the brain. After the AED is attached and delivers a shock, the typical AED will prompt the operator to continue CPR while the device continues to analyze the victim.

If AEDs are so easy to use, why do people need formal training in how to use them?

An AED operator must know how to recognize the signs of a sudden cardiac arrest, when to activate the EMS system, and how to do CPR. It's also important for operators to receive formal training on the AED model they will use so that they become familiar with the device and are able to successfully operate it in an emergency. Training also teaches the operator how to avoid potentially hazardous situations.

Can anyone buy an AED?

AEDs are manufactured and sold under guidelines approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The FDA may require someone who purchases an AED to present a physician's prescription for the device.

My health club has identified a member physician willing to purchase an AED for the club. What's the first step in the process?

Your local EMS system can help you find out about local and state protocols and requirements for AED training and use.

The police are the first responders in my community. Officials are reluctant to have them carry and use AEDs for fear of potential litigation. What legislation is currently in effect to protect first responders who use an AED?

If the person is a trained and licensed medical first responder (MFR), an established standard of care is outlined in the law, and those operating within these guidelines are protected under these laws. These same guidelines pertain to the personnel in your EMS system. If they are not trained and licensed MFRs, check the state laws to determine if lay rescuers are given limited liability immunity. If not, they may not be protected from litigation. Agencies should seek legal counsel before implementing a defibrillation program.

How much does an AED cost?

The price of an AED varies by make and model. Most AEDs cost between \$1,500–\$2,000.

What steps should an organization take to buy an AED for its premises?

Any person or entity wanting to buy an AED may first need to get a prescription from a physician. The AED should be placed for use within an AED program that includes these elements:

- Training of all users in CPR and operation of an AED (this can be achieved through the AHA Heartsaver CPR AED course).
- Physician oversight to ensure appropriate maintenance and use of the AED.
- Notifying local EMS of the type and location of AED(s).

Can AEDs be used on children?

Children over age 8 can be treated with a standard AED. For children ages 1–8, the AHA recommends the pediatric attenuated pads that are purchased separately. In infants <1 year of age a manual defibrillator is preferred. If a manual defibrillator is not available, an AED with a dose attenuator may be used.

Which AED model does the AHA recommend?

The AHA does not recommend a specific device. All AED models have similar features, but the slight differences between them allow them to meet a variety of needs. The AHA encourages potential buyers to consider all models and make a selection based on the buyer's particular needs. The local EMS system can help you with this decision.

Training

How can I enroll in a CPR AED class?

The American Heart Association offers CPR AED eLearning and instructor-led training courses. Visit [heart.org/workforcetraining](https://www.heart.org/workforcetraining) for more information.

