Implementing an AED Program in the Faith Community Setting

An Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is a computerized medical device that checks a person’s heart rhythm & recognizes a rhythm that requires an electric shock. The AED can advise a rescuer when a shock is needed; the device uses voice prompts, lights, and text messages to tell the rescuer what steps to take.

The American Heart Association (AHA) strongly encourages companies/organizations to implement AED programs to increase the chances of survival for people who have heart-related emergencies. The goal of every AED program is to deliver defibrillation to a sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) victim within three to five minutes after collapse.

All 50 states and the District of Columbia now include using an AED as part of their Good Samaritan laws. Check your state’s Good Samaritan Act for specific information, and if necessary, seek legal counsel and review of your program by a risk management or safety team.

Key Steps to Implementing an AED Program

Step 1: Obtain medical oversight.
- The role of the physician varies depending on the size of the AED program.
  - Responsibilities of the physician may include:
    - Signing off on or making recommendations on training plans, policies/procedures
    - Evaluating data recorded on an AED during a medical emergency
    - Helping assess each use of an AED to recommend any improvements
- A designated program coordinator should be responsible for day-to-day program implementation.

Step 2: Work with local Emergency Medical Services (EMS).
- Most states require you to coordinate your AED program with local EMS and to provide follow-up data to EMS after any use of the AED.
- For states that require registration or an application for AED programs, the physician or program coordinator should complete this process.

Step 3: Choose an AED.
- Several AEDs are on the market that are suitable for faith community AED programs; choose one that is simple and easy to use.
- The American Red Cross partners with manufacturers to assist organizations in obtaining an AED.

Step 4: Contact technical support.
- Research the history of the manufacturer you are considering for purchase of an AED.
- Contact the manufacturer’s technical support number to assess response time and availability.
• Arrange for technical support when your AED device requires it.

**Step 5: Check for program support from the AED manufacturer.**

• Some AED manufacturers provide help with program implementation and ongoing support, and can assist with placement, medical authorization, registration, training, and supplies; determine if available services would be helpful in deploying your AED program.

**Step 6: Place your AED(s) in a visible and accessible location.**

• Effective AED programs are designed to deliver a shock to a victim within three to five minutes of pulseless ventricular fibrillation (cardiac arrest); use a three-minute response time as a guideline to help you determine how many AEDs you need for your setting and where the best location is for them.

**Step 7: Develop a training plan.**

• AED users should be trained in Basic Life Support cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and use of the AED.

• Multiple responders in the faith community should be trained in CPR and the use of the AED, and ongoing training can help increase the comfort and confidence level of responders.

• The American Heart Association and American Red Cross offer CPR AED training in a classroom setting and through an eLearning format.

**Step 8: Raise awareness of the AED program.**

• After initial implementation of the AED program, provide information to all congregants about the AED program.

• Use internal newsletters, posters, magnets, signage, or other means to promote the AED program and identify where the devices are located.

• Continually raising awareness of the program reinforces to congregants that the faith community is committed to their safety.

**Step 9: Implement an ongoing AED maintenance routine.**

• Conduct a weekly or monthly visual inspection of the AEDs to ensure the devices are in working order.
  
  o The program coordinator or another designated person can do the AED inspections.
  
  o This person develops a written checklist to assess the readiness of the AED and supplies.
  
  o This checklist supplements regularly scheduled, more detailed inspections, as recommended by the manufacturer.

• Communicate with your manufacturer regularly to get the latest information about software updates or upgrades.
Special Considerations for the Faith Community Nurse

- When initiating an AED program, work in collaboration with faith community leadership to follow the protocol recommended by the American Heart Association.
- Identify key persons within the faith community to become CPR-certified and trained to use the specific AED device selected for the faith community. Ongoing training should be offered to maximize the number of people trained.
- Work with key leadership to:
  - Determine the appropriate resources for the oversight and management of the AED program
  - Ensure appropriate oversight, implementation, maintenance, education and training, and notification of local EMS are in place for the AED program
  - Develop appropriate policies and procedures specific to the established AED program within the faith community setting.

### Steps for Success for AED Programs in Faith Communities

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<tr>
<td>Explore interest and feasibility for developing an AED program; form a Task Force to explore the idea of installing an AED.</td>
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<td>Contact local EMS for oversight of the program.</td>
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<td>Establish a budget and research vendors.</td>
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<td>Identify leaders who will provide training and those who will be trained.</td>
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<td>Follow the steps recommended by the AHA.</td>
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<td>Commit to ongoing education and recertification.</td>
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### References: