

Awareness for Administrators

- There are about 350,000 sudden cardiac deaths (SCD) in the US each year, almost 1,000/day. These victims could be on your staff or visitors to your school.
- At least 600-1,000 of these occur in children and adolescents each year, so we can expect there might be 10-25 student deaths in Georgia each year.
- **There have been at least 27 probable sudden cardiac deaths in Georgia schools since fall 2004: 2 ES students, 4 MS students, 10 HS students and 11 adult staff and visitors.**
- **There have also been 22 “saves” in Georgia schools since Dec. 2007, most in schools that have implemented this HeartSafe program.**
- During Sudden Cardiac Arrest (SCA) the heart goes into ventricular fibrillation or “ineffective quivering” and can no longer pump blood to the brain and other vital organs.
- Early CPR and early defibrillation are required to save the victim’s life.
- Time is the critical element. Three to five minutes is the optimum time for emergency response. Don’t waste precious time trying to figure out what may have happened—someone on the staff should call 911, while a first responder initiates CPR and someone else brings the AED to the scene if there is one in the school.
- Survival rates decrease by 10% with each minute of delay.
- A shock delivered by an automated external defibrillator (AED) within 3-5 minutes can save a life. We cannot wait for Emergency Medical Services.
- The AED will look for a “shockable” heart rhythm and will only deliver a shock if it is needed.
- All rescuers are covered by the Good Samaritan Law.
- A student victim of sudden cardiac arrest may just complain of feeling faint or dizzy, usually during or just after exercise. They will rapidly become unconscious. There may be irregular and ineffective breathing for a short time.
- A core group of staff members (at least 5) should be trained in CPR and AED use.
- Practice drills are also recommended at least annually.
- Since anyone might be the one to witness the event, it is important for all staff members to have some general awareness of these facts: what a sudden cardiac event looks like, warning signs, importance of a rapid response, basic AED information (where it is and what it is), the school communication plan and how they can initiate and help in the emergency response.
- Early warning signs of sudden cardiac arrest risk include:
 - Fainting or dizziness during or right after exercise.
 - Excessive fatigue or shortness of breath with exercise
 - Chest pain or discomfort with exercise.
 - Family history of a sudden, unexplained death before age 50.

For more information on recognition as a Project S.A.V.E. HeartSafe school or a free consultation for your school please contact Richard Lamphier, RN Clinical Program Manager Project S.A.V.E., Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta at 404-785-7201 or richard.lamphier@choa.org