

## Creating awareness for administrators - Sudden cardiac arrest statistics

- 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 to 1,000 of these occur in children and adolescents each year, so we can expect there might be 10-25 student deaths in Texas each year.
- **In the United States alone, one young competitive athlete dies every three days from an unrecognized cardiovascular disorder.**
- Sudden Cardiac Arrest may be the first sign of an undetected heart problem.
- **There have been at least 97 students that have had sudden cardiac arrests in our Texas schools since January 2006. Of those, only 32 of these students have survived.**
- 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 needs to 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 “shock-able” 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. It is advisable for all coaches and PE teachers to have this training also.
- AED 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 (such as where it is and what it is), the school communication plan and how they can initiate and help in the emergency response.

### **The 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.

These emergencies are always devastating to the school community. Awareness, planning, education and advocacy can and will save lives. For assistance with your planning or a free consultation for your school, please contact Laura Friend, Project ADAM Coordinator at Cook Children’s Heart Center:

[laura.friend@cookchildrens.org](mailto:laura.friend@cookchildrens.org) or 682-885-6755.