

How to Plan and Execute a Cardiac Emergency Response Drill

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Conducting drills as part of your Project ADAM program is essential. No matter how comfortable the response team is with the knowledge gained from training, many glitches can and do occur when an incident arises. Drills help to work out potential challenges, alleviate fears and build confidence in responders.

Doing regular drills is the best way to test your Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP), your communication system and your response team's readiness. Use the steps below to execute a basic school-based drill. Utilize the [Drill Checklist](#) for an objective post-drill review. Drills should be performed at least once per school year to assure optimal performance during an actual emergency. However, you should consider multiple drills a school year, for example, one drill per semester.

Planning the Drill:

WHEN

Inform your team that you will be doing a drill in the next few weeks, so they have time to review the CERP in advance. Do not tell them exactly when you will do the drill. Ensure that the team member who would normally communicate with EMS does not call 911 unless pre-arranged and be sure it is clearly communicated that this is only a drill.

The team's first few drills can take place at a time when students are not present to build confidence. A few examples of times are before or after school or on a staff in-service day. Once the team is comfortable, it is recommended a drill take place during the school day to make for a more realistic situation.

WHO

The drill will involve the following individuals:

- School Site Coordinator (the person planning the drill)

- Cardiac Emergency Response Team
- A recorder (to record times on the Drill Checklist during the drill)
 - It is important that the recorder is present on scene and next to where the manikin and AED Training Unit are placed so they can accurately complete the checklist as the drill occurs.
- A finder (pick someone to find the manikin and initiate your drill)

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Radio/walkie talkie/other communication devices for team members and office staff
- School AED along with the first responder kit
- Manikin – If your school does not have access to this equipment, consider reaching out to your local EMS/Fire organization, hospital, or other community partners to see if a loaner is available.
 - Consider placing an old t-shirt on the manikin to mimic a real-life emergency.
- AED Training Unit (compatible with manikin) – If your school does not have access to this equipment, consider reaching out to your local EMS/Fire organization, hospital, or other community partners to see if a loaner is available.
- Drill Checklist – preferably on a clipboard with a pen or pencil
- Stopwatch or cell phone to track time

Consider inviting your local Project ADAM Coordinator and/or EMS to your drill. They may be able to provide some of the above supplies and offer a fresh perspective.

WHERE

Drills can be held anywhere on campus so all staff can practice and identify what they will be looking for (unresponsiveness and abnormal or no breathing) and what they will do. If students are on campus, be sure they are informed beforehand about what the drill may look like and that it is only a drill.

Use these drills to challenge your team and determine the appropriateness of your AED locations – can you get an AED to the playground in under three minutes? What about the choir room?

The Day of the Drill:

The School Site Coordinator should place a manikin on the floor along with the AED Training Unit. The recorder should be standing next to the manikin with the checklist and pen in hand. Have the finder call the front office advising them that this is only a drill. Tell them you have an unresponsive victim and give the location. Your plan now goes into effect.

The team should be notified using the established Code (i.e., Code Blue, Code AED, Medical Emergency Response Team, etc.) using the team's established communication system (i.e., overhead announcements, intercoms, walkie-talkies, cell phones, etc.). Your Recorder should document each step as it happens using the [Drill Checklist](#).

As part of the drill, a team member will arrive with the AED. Place the real AED to the side. The AED Training Unit will be used for the drill. **Never apply the real school AED pads for a drill.**

Project ADAM recommends your drill lasts through at least two rounds of CPR and AED use. If you have invited EMS to support your drill, the team will continue their rescue until EMS arrives and instructs they will take over.

After the Drill:

Thank everyone for responding. Spend a few minutes debriefing:

- Review the checklist together, including the post-drill review questions
- Were there any missed steps?
- Were there communication problems?
- Ask the team members for feedback and discuss suggestions and concerns.
- Consider whether there are any action steps needed.

If the drill leads to changes in the plan, be sure to make the changes to your CERP and communicate the changes to your team.

Plan another drill to test the revised plan within the next couple of months.