Heart Safe School Designation Implementation
Best Practices for Affiliates
Last Updated 9/1/2025

Our Mission – Project ADAM saves lives by empowering schools and communities to be prepared for a sudden cardiac arrest. Over the past 25 years, Project ADAM affiliates have worked to ensure schools have AEDs on site and trained staff able to response to a Sudden Cardiac Arrest.

How to use this document – Project ADAM promotes autonomy for local affiliates to implement Heart Safe programs and activities based on the current readiness and needs of local schools and communities. Use this document to set your local guidelines. Please note, this is a compilation of Best Practices and should not limit any extra activities or documentation you request from local schools.

Best Practices Guide for Affiliates

1. **Develop local Heart Safe School (HSS) program criteria**:
   Project ADAM affiliate program sites should use the Project ADAM Heart Safe School Program Checklist as a starting point for developing a program to engage local schools. Program quality criteria in the checklist reflect recommendations outlined in the Cardiac Emergency Response Planning for Schools: A Policy Statement.

2. **Where and how to connect with schools?**
   There are many avenues to connect with schools locally or have them find out about your efforts. Here are some ideas to get you started.
   - Clinic referral program at your hospital to reach patient families and have them be advocates in their schools.
   - Host Virtual or in-person Heart Safe School Workshops {additional resources on affiliate login site}
   - Join Annual Education / State School Nursing Conferences
   - Use SCA events to connect

3. **Getting schools started with the process:**
   There are introductory email templates within our affiliate login site you can customize and send to interested schools. Consider having the schools complete and return the HSS Checklist to you as an initial assessment and to collect their baseline data. From there you can set up a virtual or in-person meeting to discuss their needs. Share the school resources Project ADAM has to offer.

4. **Getting schools to the finish line:**
   - Legal considerations – state laws for CPR/AED programs may be a benefit in encouraging schools to complete the HSS process. You can check what your affiliate state has in place here: https://www.projectadam.com/Advocacy/Map
   - Coaching and resource connecting – talk with them by phone or email on the needs they have on the checklist. Connect them with local EMS/Fire for possible AED drill support.
   - Incentives – sometimes reminder of the banner to showcase completion or offering AED replacement pads can motivate a school to complete the process.
   - Newsletters – sending an e newsletter to all your local contacts can keep the process top of mind for schools.
   - Support to observe an AED drill or provide a staff hands-only CPR/AED training if local resources are available.

5. **HSS completion documentation provided to affiliate program**:
   Once a school has all the Heart Safe School components in place; a school should provide documentation and confirmation their program is complete and well-practiced. **At a minimum, affiliates should collect documentation from a school that acknowledges completion of the Project ADAM Heart Safe School Program Checklist and showcases the support of their school/district administrator.**
   - On the affiliate login site, you will find a sample *HSS Designation Acknowledgment form* you can adapt locally.
   - Some sites collect a copy of the completed checklist and a cardiac emergency response drill form.
   - Some affiliate sites have built databases in REDCap or Salesforce that allow the school to complete the checklist and other documentation forms electronically. An Excel document can also work to track completion data.

6. **Methods of collecting documentation from schools:**
   Based on program bandwidth, we recognize each program may not be able to travel to the schools due to funding and scheduling restrictions. Here are a few options that can be used to collect documentation of HSS designation from schools. **Most Project ADAM HSS completion data is self-report.**
   - Virtual / self-reporting – schools complete the necessary documentation and submit the paperwork to their local Project ADAM program coordinator.
   - Drill observation / On-site assessment – visit a school to observe their 'final' cardiac emergency response drill prior to becoming a designated Heart Safe School.
   - Partnership with a state-based agency – example: MI, State Department of Health/Human Services maintains the HSS database for Michigan schools.

7. **Incentives:**
   Partner schools achieving Heart Safe School Designation through Project ADAM should be incentivized based on funding available to do so locally. Some ideas include Heart Safe School banners, certificates and/or offering free AED replacement pads in the event they use their AED in

an emergency. **A Heart Safe School banner is the recommended incentive for schools completing the process locally.**

8. **Renewal Cycle**:
   Partner schools should 'renew' Heart Safe School status with their local Project ADAM affiliate program to ensure continuity of cardiac emergency preparedness program quality. **At a minimum, affiliates should collect documentation from a school that acknowledges completion of the Project ADAM Heart Safe School Program Checklist and showcases the support of their school/district administrator. The recommended renewal period is every three years.** Project ADAM supports the decision of affiliates to choose alternate renewal options based on what works locally, examples are as follows:
   - Three year renewal – This time period is a recommended option for affiliate sites that may have a larger volume of schools / larger region to cover. This allows for more time in between designation cycles resulting in spread out work load and cost (renewal banners, stickers, etc.)
   - Two year renewal – This time period is a recommended option as schools update their CPR/AED certification/training every two years, so renewing HSS status would be a natural addition to this process.
   - Annual verification– Some programs provide banner stickers for every year a school verifies they have done all the annual requirements from the Heart Safe School Checklist. For example, you may develop an online form for your program's website that asks schools to answer yes/no to the annual HSS checklist requirements and asks them to upload a copy of their most recent drill checklist.