

How to Plan and Execute a Cardiac Emergency Response Drill in Youth Sports



Conducting drills as part of your cardiac emergency response preparedness is essential. 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, your communication system and your response team's readiness. Drills should be performed at least once a season or twice a year to ensure optimal performance and competency during an actual emergency.

Use the steps below to plan and execute a cardiac emergency response drill for your sports team. Use the Drill Checklist for an objective post-drill review and debriefing.

Planning the Drill:

WHO WILL PARTICIPATE:

- Site Coordinator (person coordinating training, AED, and plans. Examples: league manager, head coach, safety director, volunteer parent)
- Cardiac Emergency Response Team: Coaches, volunteers, parents, athletes
- Recorder (to document times on the Drill Checklist)
 - It is important that the recorder is present on scene and next to where the manikin and AED Trainer are placed so they can accurately complete the checklist as the drill occurs.
- Consider inviting your local EMS to your drill. They may be able to provide the supplies needed for a drill and offer their expertise and feedback.

WHEN:

Drills can be planned in advance and communicated to the coaches and staff, or they can be planned as a surprise during practice. Provide the CERP in advance for review. A drill should take place when most members are able to attend. It is recommended that drills take place when athletes are present for a more realistic situation.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED

- Manikin
- T-shirt or other protective equipment (Example: chest pads and gear, helmet)
- AED training unit
 - *If you do not have access to this equipment, consider reaching out to your local EMS, hospital or other community partners to see if a loaner is available.
- Radio/walkie talkie/other communication device (if this is available and used within your group)
- Drill Checklist w/ a clipboard and pen
- Stopwatch or cell phone to track time

WHERE

Drills can be anywhere at your field or facility. If athletes are on site, be sure they are informed beforehand about what the drill may look like and that it is only a drill. Select a location that tests the retrieval time of the AED (example: in the outfield, furthest point from your AED).

The Day of the Drill:

The Site Coordinator should place a manikin on the ground along with the AED training unit. The recorder should be standing next to the manikin with the Drill Checklist and pen in hand. Your Recorder should document each step as it happens using the Drill Checklist.

Have the finder call for help and alert the response team/bystanders. Tell them you have an unresponsive victim and give the location. Your plan now goes into effect.

The team/bystanders should be notified using the established Code (i.e. Code Heart, Code AED, Medical Emergency Response Team, etc.) using the team's established communication system (i.e. overhead announcements, intercoms, walkie-talkies, cell phones, etc.).

As part of the drill, a team member will arrive with the AED(s). Place the real AED to the side. The AED training unit will be used for the drill. **Never apply the real AED pads for drills.** Proceed as if this was a real cardiac arrest situation – mock call 911, perform CPR, cut shirt/equipment off manikin, turn AED on, place trainer pads, deliver shock, control the crowd, send someone to wait for EMS.

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, continue with your rescue until EMS arrives and instructs they are ready to 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.

Additional Drill Considerations:

- Consider your specific sports clothing and/or protective equipment that might need to be removed during a cardiac emergency. Use old or expired equipment during your drill.
- Communication may vary greatly between facilities and sports teams. There are multiple methods that are appropriate and work, choose the best one for your team!
 - Cell Phones
 - Walkie Talkies
 - Overhead Intercoms
- Closed loop direct communication is important during an emergency. Be specific and announce that roles are being completed:
 - "Johnny, can you call 911?" "Yes, I am calling 911 now!"
 - "I am going to meet EMS"
 - "I am calling the parents"
- Your local EMS is one of your best resources:
 - They have training equipment you can borrow
 - They have expertise in these types of scenarios and can offer a fresh perspective and insight
 - They will be the ones responding in an actual emergency
- Find athlete parents to be your champions. Many are in the medical field and would be willing to help. All parents want their child to be safe and would welcome the peace of mind that comes with knowing that their coaches and volunteers are appropriately trained and prepared.