

FACT SHEET: Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs)

- An AED is a small portable computerized device that analyzes heart rhythms and advises the operator, through computerized voice instructions, when to push a button to deliver a potentially lifesaving shock to the victim. They are safe, effective and easy to use. Most AEDs are no bigger than a laptop computer, weighing less than 10 pounds.
- When someone collapses from sudden cardiac arrest, average survival rate is six percent; and only one to five percent in some communities. As many as 30 to 50 percent could likely survive if cardiopulmonary resuscitation and AEDs were used within five minutes of a collapse.
- Early defibrillation with an AED is a critical link in the chain-of-survival because the time between collapse and defibrillation is a key indicator of survival from sudden cardiac arrest. For patients in Ventricular fibrillation, previous studies have shown if early defibrillation is provided within the first minute, the odds are 90 percent that the victim's life can be saved. After that, the rate of survival drops 10 percent with every minute.
- A 1998 University of Pittsburgh study found that people in sudden cardiac arrest were nearly 10 times more likely to survive if police who arrived at the scene before paramedics used an AED. Yet, less than one third of police departments are equipped with AEDs.
- The Public Health Improvement Act, signed by President Clinton on Nov. 13, 2000, includes provisions for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide awareness and guidance in the placement of AEDs in federal buildings.

Figure 1: Universal AED Symbol

