

AP 3.15 RESPONDING TO UNEXPECTED HEALTH EMERGENCIES

RATIONALE

Health emergencies can occur without warning. A timely, coordinated response—including critical intervention before first responders arrive—can save lives and is essential to a safe, secure school environment. The Board of Education expects every school to plan and prepare, ensuring staff, students, and facilities are equipped and ready to respond. Plans must comply with Ministry of Education and Child Care, WorkSafeBC, and District policies and be tailored to the needs and context of each school community. Prepared schools protect safety and well-being, strengthen confidence, and allow teaching and learning to continue with minimal disruption.

1. SCOPE

This Administrative Procedure applies to all District schools and sites, including school grounds and school-sponsored off-site activities. It guides staff in responding to unexpected health emergencies, such as (but not limited to):

- Cardiac arrest
- Suspected overdose
- Anaphylaxis and other allergic reactions
- Respiratory distress or breathing difficulties
- Seizures
- Diabetic emergencies
- Severe bleeding or other serious injuries

This procedure also provides direction for the use and maintenance of Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs), naloxone, and any additional emergency medical tools adopted by the District in future.

2. DEFINITIONS

Unexpected health emergency: A sudden, serious health event that requires immediate intervention to protect life, health, or safety until emergency responders arrive.

Automatic External Defibrillator (AED): A portable device used to analyze heart rhythm and deliver an electric shock if needed during sudden cardiac arrest.

Naloxone: A medication used to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose.

Designated responder / First aid attendant: A staff member who has received required training and is designated by the Principal to respond to health emergencies.

3. RESPONSE PROTOCOL

When an unexpected health emergency occurs on school grounds or during a school-sponsored activity, staff will:

1. Ensure safety:

- o Quickly assess the scene for safety and remove immediate hazards where possible.

2. Call for help:

- o Activate the school's emergency response procedure (e.g., notify the office, use the PA, etc.).
- o Call local emergency services without delay.

3. Provide first aid:

- o A designated responder or first aid attendant will provide first aid within the scope of their training. This may include:

- CPR and use of an AED;
- Administration of naloxone for suspected opioid overdose;
- Use of an EpiPen or other prescribed emergency medication, where applicable;
- Control of bleeding and other first aid measures.

4. Support and supervise students:

- o Ensure other students are supervised away from the immediate scene and provided with appropriate emotional support.

5. Communicate with caregivers:

- o The Principal or designate will contact parents/guardians/emergency contacts as soon as reasonably possible.

6. Assist first responders:

- o Provide information to paramedics and emergency personnel upon arrival, including observed symptoms, actions taken, and any medications administered.

7. Document and debrief:

- o Complete all required documentation (see Section 6).
- o Debrief with staff and, where appropriate, consider follow-up supports for students and staff.

4. REQUIRED EQUIPMENT (EACH SCHOOL):

Each school must ensure the following life-saving equipment is available on site:

- Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs)
- Naloxone kits

These devices must be:

- Readily accessible, clearly identified, and in working order.
- AEDs must be permanently wall-mounted in a fixed, clearly signed, barrier-free location to ensure rapid access.
- Marked with standardized signage to support quick identification and use.
- Subject to routine inspection and maintenance per District, provincial, and manufacturer specifications, including functionality checks and expiry-date monitoring. Concerns must be reported immediately to the Facilities Department for follow-up.
- Presented and stored in a non-stigmatizing manner to encourage confident and equitable use by staff and, where applicable, trained community responders.

This Administrative Procedure also applies to any additional emergency health tools or devices adopted by the District in future.

5. TRAINING:

Principals will submit an annual list to the Superintendent or designate identifying the school's certified first responders. These staff members will be provided with opportunities for training, as needed, in:

- First aid and CPR
- Use of AEDs
- Administration of naloxone
- Any other emergency medical tools adopted by the District

Principals are responsible for ensuring that required training is completed, documented, and refreshed in accordance with District and WorkSafeBC requirements.

6. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

All staff must respect student and family privacy when responding to and discussing health emergencies. Information about a student's health status, medications, or emergency response will only be shared on a need-to-know basis in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIPPA) and District policy.

References

- [School Act \(PDF, 1.2MB\)](#) - Sections 88(1) and 168(2)(t)
- [Support Services for Schools Order \(PDF, 126KB\)](#) (M149/89)
- [Ministry of Education and Child Care – Response to Unexpected Health Emergencies Policy Guidance](#)