

2026 -- S 2079

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S T A T E O F R H O D E I S L A N D

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2026

A N A C T

RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

Introduced By: Senators Tikoian, Ciccone, Gallo, McKenney, Paolino, Bissaillon, DiPalma, Murray, Patalano, and LaMountain

Date Introduced: January 16, 2026

Referred To: Senate Education

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1 SECTION 1. Section 16-21-33.1 of the General Laws in Chapter 16-21 entitled "Health
2 and Safety of Pupils" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3 **16-21-33.1. ~~Automatic external defibrillators~~ Automated external defibrillators, cardiac emergency response plans, and athletic emergency action plans.**

5 (a) Legislative findings:

6 ~~(1) Approximately three hundred twenty-five thousand (325,000) Americans suffer sudden~~
7 ~~cardiac arrest ("SCA") each year and more than ninety-five percent (95%) of them die before~~
8 ~~reaching the hospital;~~

9 ~~(2) In the population of Rhode Island, an estimated one thousand (1,000) residents will die~~
10 ~~of cardiac arrest every year;~~

11 ~~(3) No official statistics have been gathered about SCA in children, however experts~~
12 ~~estimate about three hundred (300) deaths because of SCA every year for people under the age of~~
13 ~~twenty-one (21) or about one tenth of one percent (.001%);~~

14 ~~(4) This means that at least one person under the age of twenty-one (21) years, most likely~~
15 ~~a student, will die due to athletics related SCA every year in Rhode Island;~~

16 ~~(5) If defibrillation is performed within five (5) to seven (7) minutes, chances of survival~~
17 ~~are increased by forty-nine percent (49%). Every minute that goes by without defibrillation reduces~~
18 ~~the chance of survival by seven percent (7%) to ten percent (10%);~~

19 ~~(6) Automated external defibrillators (AEDs) are extremely accurate computerized devices~~

1 that can be operated by the average person;

2 (7) AEDs are inexpensive and grants for AEDs are mostly given to nonprofit organizations,

3 such as schools; and

4 (8) AEDs can be acquired through grants from various organizations or through

5 government agencies.

6 (1) More than three hundred fifty-six thousand (356,000) sudden cardiac arrests occur

7 outside of a hospital each year in the United States. About ten percent (10%) of people survive.

8 (2) It is estimated that there are more than twenty-three thousand (23,000) children under

9 the age of eighteen (18) who experience sudden cardiac arrest outside of a hospital each year in the

10 United States. Almost forty percent (40%) of these events are sports related.

11 (3) In schools with automated external defibrillators (AEDs), approximately seventy

12 percent (70%) of children survive sudden cardiac arrest, seven (7) times the overall survival rate

13 for children.

14 (4) The safety of students, school staff, visitors and spectators can be enhanced with a

15 coordinated, practiced response plan where teams are trained and empowered to administer

16 lifesaving care until emergency medical services (EMS) arrive on scene.

17 (5) When sudden cardiac arrest occurs outside of a hospital, survival more than doubles

18 when people nearby take action by dialing 911, starting CPR and using a publicly available AED

19 compared to waiting for emergency responders to arrive.

20 (b) Definitions: As used in this section, the following words shall have the following

21 meanings:

22 (1) "Athletic emergency action plan (EAP)" means written guidelines and templates for

23 documentation of emergency planning to help prepare individuals for a catastrophic injury situation

24 within sports.

25 (2) "Automated external defibrillator (AED)" means a lightweight, portable device that

26 delivers an electric shock through the chest to the heart. The shock can potentially stop an irregular

27 heartbeat (arrhythmia) and allow a normal rhythm to resume following sudden cardiac arrest.

28 (3) "Cardiac emergency response plan (CERP)" means a written document that establishes

29 the specific steps to reduce death from cardiac arrest in any setting, be it a school, community

30 organization, workplace, or sports facility.

31 (4) "Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA)" means when the heart malfunctions and stops beating

32 unexpectedly. If not treated within minutes, it quickly leads to death.

33 (b)(c) All high schools and middle schools, whether they are public or privately run, shall

34 provide and maintain on-site functional automated external defibrillators (AEDs) in quantities and

1 ~~types, deemed by the commissioner of education, in consultation with the director of health,~~
2 accordance with guidelines set by the American Heart Association or an organization focused on
3 emergency cardiovascular care, and as outlined in subsections (d) and (e) of this section, to be
4 adequate to ensure ready and appropriate access for use during emergencies. Whenever school
5 facilities are used for school-sponsored or school-approved curricular or extracurricular activities,
6 and whenever a school-sponsored athletic contest is held at any location, the school officials and
7 administrators responsible for such school facility or athletic contest shall ensure the presence of at
8 least one person who is properly trained in cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the operation
9 and use of an AED. Such training may be conducted by qualified personnel, including, but not
10 limited to, municipal fire and police department employees.

11 (d) Establishing cardiac emergency response plans in schools.

12 (1) Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, each high school and middle school shall
13 develop a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP) that addresses the appropriate use of school
14 personnel to respond to incidents involving an individual experiencing sudden cardiac arrest or a
15 similar life-threatening emergency while on school grounds.

16 (2) Each CERP shall integrate evidence-based core elements, such as those recommended
17 by American Heart Association guidelines or nationally-recognized, evidence-based standards
18 focused on emergency cardiovascular care.

19 (3) Appropriate AED placement shall be determined by the CERP in accordance with
20 guidelines set by the American Heart Association or an organization focused on emergency
21 cardiovascular care. AEDs shall be identified with appropriate signage and made available in an
22 unlocked location on school property. AEDs shall be tested and maintained according to the
23 manufacturer's operational guidelines. Notification shall be provided to the appropriate emergency
24 medical services provider regarding the AED, the type acquired, and its location.

25 (4) Appropriate school staff shall be trained in first aid, CPR, and AED use. Training shall
26 be consistent with national evidence-based emergency cardiovascular care guidelines. Staff trained
27 shall be determined by the CERP including, but not limited to, licensed coaches, school nurses, and
28 athletic trainers.

29 (e) Establishing athletic emergency action plans (EAPs) for high school and middle school
30 athletic venues and events.

31 (1) Beginning in the 2027-2028 school year, each high school and middle school with an
32 athletic department or organized athletic program shall develop an athletic emergency action plan
33 (EAP) to respond to incidents of sudden cardiac arrest or a similar life-threatening emergency
34 during a school athletic practice or event. The EAP shall follow nationally-recognized

1 recommendations and be venue-specific, posted, widely distributed, and rehearsed annually.

2 (2) An AED shall be clearly marked and easily accessible in an unlocked location at each
3 school athletic venue during any school-sponsored athletic event or team practice in which students
4 of the school are participating. AEDs shall be tested and maintained according to the manufacturer's
5 operational guidelines. Notification shall be provided to the appropriate emergency medical
6 services provider regarding the AED, the type acquired, and its location.

7 (3) All high school and middle school coaches shall obtain and maintain training in first
8 aid, CPR, and AED use. Certification in CPR and AED use shall be consistent with national
9 evidence-based emergency cardiovascular care guidelines.

10 (f) Implementation.

11 (1) The commissioner of education, in collaboration with the director of the department of
12 health, may adopt rules and regulations to implement this section.

13 (2) The commissioner of education, in collaboration with the director of the department of
14 health, shall establish a process to monitor compliance with this section.

15 (3) A local education agency may accept gifts, grants, and donations, including in-kind
16 donations designated for the purchase of an AED that meets the standards established by the United
17 States Food and Drug Administration and for the costs incurred to inspect and maintain such device
18 and train staff in the use of such device.

19 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

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EXPLANATION
BY THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
OF
A N A C T
RELATING TO EDUCATION -- HEALTH AND SAFETY OF PUPILS

- 1 This act would expand the requirement that all high schools and middle schools, whether
- 2 they are publicly or privately run, to maintain on site functional automated external defibrillators
- 3 (AED) while establishing and implementing a cardiac emergency response plan in these schools,
- 4 inclusive of athletic activities, beginning in the 2027-2028 academic year.
- 5 This act would take effect upon passage.

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