

THE COMMUNITY ACCESS TO EMERGENCY DEFIBRILLATION ACT OF 2001

Senators Edward M. Kennedy and Bill Frist, MD

Cardiac arrest is not a heart attack – it is instant heart paralysis for which defibrillation is the only effective treatment. Every minute that passes after a cardiac arrest, a person's chance of surviving decreases by 10%. Cardiac arrest takes a tremendous toll on the American public; each year, it kills over 220,000 people. Few communities, however, have programs to make emergency defibrillation widely accessible to cardiac arrest victims. Those that do have achieved average survival rates for out-of-hospital cardiac arrest as high as 50 percent. Wide use of defibrillators could save as many as 50,000 lives nationally each year.

The Community AED Act of 2001, which amends the Public Health Service Act, provides \$50 million for communities to establish public access defibrillation programs. This legislation is strongly supported by a large number of leading health care organizations. Communities receiving these grants will:

- train local emergency medical services personnel to administer immediate care, including CPR and automated external defibrillation, to cardiac arrest victims;
- purchase and place automated external defibrillators in public places where cardiac arrests are likely to occur;
- train personnel in places with defibrillators to use them properly and administer CPR to cardiac arrest victims;
- inform local emergency medical services personnel, including dispatchers, about the location of defibrillators in their community;
- train members of the public in CPR and automated external defibrillation;
- ensure proper maintenance and testing of defibrillators in the community;
- encourage private companies in the community to purchase automated external defibrillators and train employees in CPR and emergency defibrillation; and
- collect data to evaluate the effectiveness of the program in decreasing the out-of-hospital cardiac arrest survival rate in the community.

The Community AED Act also provides \$5 million for community-based demonstration projects. Grantees will develop innovative approaches to maximize community access to automated external defibrillation and provide emergency defibrillation to cardiac arrest victims in unique settings. Communities receiving these grants must meet many of the same requirements for equipment maintenance, public information, and data collection included in the larger grants program.

Finally, the Community AED Act provides for a national information clearinghouse to

provide information to increase public awareness and promote access to defibrillators in schools. This center will also establish a database for information on sudden cardiac arrest in youth and will provide assistance to communities wishing to develop screening programs for at risk youth.