

The Smart Heart Act: What Your School Must Do

Every NC public school must have a Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP) for the 2026–27 school year.

WHAT THE LAW NOW REQUIRES

- ✓ A written Cardiac Emergency Response Plan (CERP), reviewed and updated yearly
- ✓ Annual CPR/AED training for identified staff
At a minimum: school nurses, and any staff supervising students during physical activity — which includes coaches.
- ✓ Annual practice drills, and the CERP integrated into local EMS responder protocols
- ✓ A cardiac emergency response team, and a written protocol for activating it
- ✓ AEDs placed on a victim within three minutes — signed, and not behind a lock or key
- ✓ At least one AED installed on the grounds of every school

WHY IT MATTERS

Sudden cardiac arrest can strike a student, staff member, or visitor without warning. Survival falls roughly 10% for every minute without defibrillation — the first three minutes decide the outcome. Compliance protects lives and shows due diligence for the district.

THE FUNDING: WHAT IT IS, AND WHAT IT BUYS

The state budget provides a one-time **\$4 million** to the NC Department of Public Instruction for 2026–27. Schools that **do not already have an AED installed are funded first — \$2,000 per school** (pro rata if the money runs short). Any remainder may go toward replacing existing AEDs or supporting cardiac emergency response training. Funds may only be used for AED purchase and installation, or for cardiac emergency response training.

\$2,000 buys more than most people assume. Spent well it covers a current-model AED with an eight-year warranty, a wall cabinet, signage and a wall tag, a bleed control kit, one onsite staff class, and installation of the first unit.

What it does not cover is the recurring part — next year's training, the annual drill, replacement pads and batteries, and the staff who replace the ones you trained. The grant closes the equipment gap once; the program is what keeps it closed.

HOW THE MONEY ACTUALLY REACHES YOUR SCHOOL

There is nothing to apply for. This is an allotment, not a grant — no application, no portal, no web form, no deadline. DPI allots it by formula to public school units, and it lands in your unit's budget.

DPI added the program report code, **PRC 0210**, to the 2026–27 Allotment Policy Manual on September 3, 2026 and has not announced it — so most finance offices have not seen it yet. Two questions worth putting to yours:

1. Does our unit have an allotment under PRC 0210?
2. Are any of our schools on the no-AED list that gets funded first?

THE PATH: SCHOOL RESCUE READY™

Rescue Beats' 8-step roadmap takes a campus from unaware to fully compliant — and keeps it there:

Understand • Assess • Build • Place • Train • Drill • Maintain • Renew

One partner for every requirement: plan, training, AEDs, drills, and documentation. The free CERP template, AED inspection log, and drill checklist are at rescuebeatspro.com/smart-heart-act-resources — no sign-up.

The State Board of Education has not yet adopted the detailed rules for AED installation, use and maintenance. Everything above is in the statute — S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 7.38, signed July 7, 2026, adding G.S. 115C-375.6 — and applies to the 2026–27 school year now.

Informational only; not legal advice. Confirm your school's specific obligations with the NC Department of Public Instruction or legal counsel. © 2026 Rescue Beats.

Start with a free School Rescue Ready™ review.

We'll show your board exactly where the school stands and what it takes to comply.

(919) 372-9657
rescuebeatspro.com