

Preparing for Medical Emergencies

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Medical emergencies can happen at any time, even during worship, session meetings, or annual congregational meetings. Sessions and pastoral leaders should consider putting together protocols to explain to ushers and leaders of the congregation how to react if a medical emergency presents itself. Questions to consider for the protocols:

1. Who makes the decision to call 911 and request an ambulance?
2. Who then makes the call to 911?
3. Who will provide immediate care for someone in an emergency?
4. What will be the role of the pastors in keeping those in worship or a meeting calm and orderly?
5. Who will provide aid and comfort to family members of the “patient” during and after an emergency? Who will follow up with the family? Pastors? Deacons?
6. Who will meet the ambulance and guide the EMTs to the “patient”?
7. Will anyone stay with the patient on the ride to the hospital?
8. Who will notify the sexton/housekeeper if clean-up is needed after an emergency?
9. Who will document the emergency in case information is requested by your insurer?
10. Where will such documentation be stored?
11. What steps should be taken if a minor is injured on a youth group trip?
12. What steps should be taken if an adult is injured on a mission trip?
13. Who will convene a group to debrief an incident?
 - a. Discuss whether and how the protocols were followed and whether any of the process needs to be adjusted or revised.
 - b. If there was an accident, what steps need to be taken to avoid such an accident in the future?

Other issues to discuss:

1. Think about how the EMTs will have to get a gurney to various locations in your buildings. Are there steps that obstruct transport of a gurney? Are there ramps?
2. Should you form a medical response team of doctors, nurses, EMTs, and other medical professionals in your congregation who will respond to emergencies?
 - a. If such a team is formed, include a list of those in the congregation who have CPR training and are willing to assist in an emergency.
 - b. Provide the team with the response protocols – or better yet, ask that team to help draft the protocols.
3. Do you need to add automated external defibrillators (AEDs) to the equipment in your church building?
4. Who will order and maintain a first aid kit? Where will it be located?
5. Talk to your insurer about when you should notify the insurer about a medical emergency.

6. Regarding #9, above, create an incident reporting form.
7. Should anyone take pictures if there is an accident (ex. slip and fall) or a medical emergency?

In your work on protocols and planning, contact your insurance company and ask if it has resources that support that work. Remember not to put the plan on the shelf and forget about it. Ask someone in the church office to calendar an annual meeting to discuss the plan to see if it needs updates, or to see if there are new folks who might be of interest for the medical response team. Share protocols and plans with the session and church staff.