The Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina
900B CentrePark Drive, Asheville, NC 28805 | (828)225-6656 | www.diocesewnc.org

Medical Emergency

Practical guidance for getting help, providing appropriate care, and clearing access for responders

CORE IDEA: Call for help early. Provide care within your training. Clear space and create a direct path for emergency responders.

When to Use This Guidance

- A person collapses, becomes unresponsive, or has difficulty breathing.
- A serious injury, fall, burn, choking incident, or other urgent medical problem occurs.
- A medical condition appears serious or is getting worse.
- You are unsure whether the situation requires emergency medical assistance.

Immediate Actions

CALL 911	Do not delay when the situation appears serious. State the church name and exact street address first, then describe the emergency.
PROVIDE CARE	People with appropriate training may provide CPR, use an AED, give first aid, or assist within the limits of their training.
CLEAR SPACE	Move unnecessary people away. Give the person privacy and give helpers room to work.
CREATE ACCESS	Open the best entrance, clear hallways and driveways, and send someone to meet and direct responders when it is safe to do so.
SUPPORT	Have someone stay with family members or companions, gather useful information, and help maintain a calm environment.

Make It Easy for Responders to Reach the Patient

- Know the best responder entrance for the sanctuary, classrooms, offices, kitchen, fellowship areas, and other regularly used spaces.
- Keep fire lanes, driveways, gates, hallways, and doors clear.
- Have someone meet EMS or fire personnel and lead them directly to the patient.
- Avoid crowding around the patient or blocking the route with chairs, equipment, or people.
- If the church campus has multiple buildings, make sure the caller can clearly identify the correct building and access point.

AEDs, First-Aid Supplies, and Trained People

- Know whether the parish has an AED and where it is located.
- Keep first-aid supplies in known, accessible locations and check them periodically.

- Know which staff, volunteers, or regular members have current CPR, AED, first-aid, nursing, medical, or other relevant training.
- Consider asking a qualified medical professional in the congregation to help review the parish medical-response plan.
- Training should support—not replace—calling professional emergency medical services when needed.

Plan for the People and Activities in Your Church

- Consider the age and medical vulnerability of the congregation and regular visitors.
- Review common hazards such as kitchens, stairs, choking risks, trip hazards, tools, equipment, and chemicals.
- Plan for medical incidents involving children and people with limited mobility.
- Consider local EMS response times and any access challenges unique to the parish property.

After the Emergency

- Document the basic facts of the incident and the actions taken.
- Notify clergy and appropriate parish leadership.
- Protect the individual's privacy; share medical information only as appropriate.
- Restock or replace any first-aid or AED supplies that were used.
- Review responder access, communications, and any problems that should be corrected before the next emergency.

Parish Decisions to Make in Advance

AED location(s)	
First-aid supply location(s)	
Best responder entrance / access route	
Who meets and directs responders?	
Known trained medical / first-aid personnel	
Who documents and follows up after an incident?	

Remember: In a medical emergency, professional help and responder access matter. Call early, use trained people appropriately, control the space, and make it easy for EMS to reach the patient.