



ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT
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NEWS RELEASE *for Immediate Release*

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St. Mary's County Installs Publicly Accessible AED Cabinets at County Facilities to Improve Emergency Response & Survival Rates

LEONARDTOWN, MD – The Commissioners of St. Mary's County are pleased to announce a new public safety initiative to improve access to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) at St. Mary's County Government (SMCG) parks and facilities.

The St. Mary's County Department of Emergency Services has partnered with Recreation & Parks, Aging & Human Services, and Public Works & Transportation to **install 13 secure AED cabinets across 12 County parks and at the Garvey Senior Activity Center** near the Pickleball Courts.

This initiative comes as part of a broader effort to enhance the “chain of survival” for victims of sudden cardiac arrest, one of the leading causes of unexpected death in the United States. According to the American Heart Association, more than 356,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests occur each year, and nearly 90% are fatal. Local data from the Cardiac Arrest Registry to Enhance Survival (CARES) shows that the second most frequent location for these events is public spaces, including sports fields and recreation areas.

“Citizens are often the first to respond in a cardiac emergency,” said Jen Utz, Director of the Department of Emergency Services. “This program empowers our community to take immediate action when seconds matter most and emergency responders are on the way.”

The new AED cabinets are designed to provide 24/7 access to lifesaving equipment. In the event of a cardiac emergency, residents should always call 911. The 911 dispatcher will provide a secure access code to unlock the cabinet, allowing bystanders to retrieve and use the AED before emergency responders arrive.

Early defibrillation has been shown to increase survival rates by 50%–75% when an AED is available on-site. In St. Mary's County, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responds to an average of 217 cardiac arrest calls each year, and the enhanced accessibility of AEDs at these locations is expected to improve outcomes countywide.

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The initiative replaces a previous model where AEDs were secured inside staffed park offices, limiting access to operating hours. Now, devices are available at any time, bridging the critical minutes before EMS arrival, which can average 8–10 minutes depending on location and call volume.

“Our parks and recreation spaces welcome thousands of residents and visitors each week, and safety is always our top priority,” said Ray Bivens, Director of Recreation & Parks. “Publicly accessible AEDs at our parks ensure that lifesaving tools are available when they’re needed most in the event of a cardiac emergency.”

In recognition of October as National Sudden Cardiac Arrest Awareness Month, the County encourages all residents to take proactive steps in preparedness by learning CPR and AED use. Community members are encouraged to sign up for a CPR class to gain the skills and confidence needed to help save a life in an emergency.

As part of this effort, the Second District Volunteer Rescue Squad will host a **free Community CPR class** in the Company 6 Training Room, located at 19330 Piney Point Road in Valley Lee, on Friday, October 24, 2025, from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. **Registration is required, and the class will be limited to 15 participants.** Those interested in attending should contact EMS Assistant Chief Kim Collins at EMSChief@sdvfdrs.org to reserve a spot.

The St. Mary's County Health Department also provides American Red Cross adult and pediatric First Aid, CPR, and AED certification to members of the community. For more information, please visit: <https://smchd.org/cpr>.

For more information about the AED initiative or CPR training opportunities, please contact the Department of Emergency Services at EmergencyServices@stmaryscountymd.gov.

For more information on SMCG programs and services, please visit www.stmaryscountymd.gov or follow St. Mary's County Government on [Facebook](#), [X](#), and [Instagram](#) for regular updates.

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