

Handling Medical Emergencies in the Classroom

Provided by Luzerne County Community College, Campus Safety & Security

Important Phone Numbers:

Campus Safety & Security: 740-0304

If on campus, dial "0"

Emergency: Dial 911

We all hope that we will never be faced with a medical emergency while teaching a class. Our experience has been that we rarely see true medical emergencies. However, we also know that they do and will happen and it is important to have a plan in mind before a medical emergency occurs.

In case of a medical emergency in your class, the most important factor is for you, as the instructor, to respond promptly and appropriately to the person in need. You are also responsible to maintain control of the class. This can be a lot to manage in time of crisis. It is recommended that you enlist a responsible person or two to help you with managing the situation until assistance arrives. This could include making emergency phone calls, relocating the students to another area, etc.

The first response, in the event of a serious medical emergency, is to call 911. If there is any doubt as to the seriousness of the situation, the safe and proper action is to call for assistance. The 911 operator will need to know the exact location of the emergency, the condition of the victim, and a phone number for a return call, if needed. If the person later refuses medical assistance, they will need to refuse directly to the emergency responders. If on main campus, immediately notify Campus Security after calling 911 and inform them of the situation. Campus Security Officers will respond to assist and direct emergency responders to the classroom. If at an off-campus site, notify the Center Director or staff as soon as possible.

After notifying 911 and Campus Security, it is acceptable to ask if there is anyone in the class with medical or first aid/CPR training who can help you until assistance arrives. You should then ask the remainder of the students to leave the classroom area, remaining clear of doorways and entrances.

By emptying the classroom, it is easier for you to assess what needs to be done without distractions and provides needed room for emergency responders. It is also considerate to the student in distress to not have an audience.

After the emergency responders and others leave with the patient, you can speak to the class about cancelling the rest of the class session or possibly rescheduling or resuming the class session. Do not discuss the medical emergency with the class other than to thank them for their cooperation.

Guidelines for Handling Medical Emergencies

- As in all emergencies, it is important to stay calm. You will need to remain in control and demonstrate a calm exterior to your students. Remember, **the first step is to call for assistance**.
- Do not provide medical assistance unless you are trained to do so and have permission from the individual.
- Protect yourself whenever possible. It is not a bad idea to have a Ziploc bag of disposable gloves in your briefcase or other accessible place. Campus Security can provide gloves.
- Don't move an injured or severely ill person unless absolutely necessary. Wait for medical responders to arrive.
- If the person is conscious and alert, allow them to assume a comfortable position. Most people will do so naturally if allowed.
- Talk to the person in a calm and reassuring manner. Get as much information as possible (i.e.; type of injury/illness, medical conditions, allergies, etc.)
- If the person is unconscious, do not try to give fluids or attempt to awaken by shaking. Loosen tight clothing, especially around the neck if breathing is restricted.
- If the person is experiencing a seizure, do not restrain him/her. Move any objects away from the person to prevent the person from being injured. If possible, place a coat, blanket or other similar object under the head.
- Check their breathing, remembering to check for airway obstructions. If the person is not getting air into their lungs, nothing else matters. Be sure to continue to monitor breathing until the person is alert, oriented, and appears to be no longer in distress or until emergency responders take over. If the person is not breathing and you don't know CPR, call out for someone who does.