

# Grant and Per Diem Program

## VHA Homeless Programs

### CPR Guidance for Out-Of-Hospital Settings

#### What is the guidance for GPD grantees and/or HCHV CRS providers regarding doing CPR during the pandemic?

The American Heart Association (AHA) develops all algorithms and guidance related to resuscitation, including BLS and ACLS courses. They published [\*Interim Guidance for Basic and Advanced Life Support in Adults, Children, and Neonates with Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19\*](#) in their journal *Circulation* in June 2020 to help address the safety needs of both the rescuers and patients while providing resuscitation. This guidance includes considerations for resuscitation in patients suspected or confirmed with COVID-19 that is applicable to the lay rescuer performing CPR in the out-of-hospital setting (e.g., GPD grantees and HCHV CRS providers) rather than in-hospital setting.

Guidance directly states:

*Lay rescuers should perform at least hands-only CPR after recognition of a cardiac arrest event, if willing and able, especially if they are household members who have been exposed to the patient at home. A face mask or cloth covering the mouth and nose of the rescuer and/or patient may reduce the risk of transmission to a non-household bystander. Because defibrillation is not expected to be a highly aerosolizing procedure, lay rescuers should use an automated external defibrillator, if available, to assess and treat patients with out-of-hospital cardiac arrest.*

Based on the AHA guidance, recommendations for out-of-hospital CPR include:

1. Wear face mask or cloth covering (both rescuer and patient if possible)
2. Don additional PPE when available (e.g., gloves, face shield/eye protection, gown)
3. Perform hands-only CPR if willing and able
4. Use an AED when available

Of note, nowhere in the AHA guidance does it explicitly state to **not** provide the rescue breathing portion (i.e., mouth-to-mouth) of out-of-hospital CPR, but rather focuses on giving high-quality chest compressions and the use of an AED for early defibrillation when available, to reduce the chance of disease transmission during resuscitation efforts. Historically, [hands-only CPR](#) has been shown to be as effective as CPR with breaths in the first few minutes of an out-of-hospital sudden cardiac arrest for an adult. This new AHA interim guidance works to address the challenges of providing resuscitation during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a goal of ensuring the best chance possible to those experiencing cardiac arrest outside the hospital without compromising the safety of lay rescuers.

### ADDITIONAL GUIDANCE

Please email the GPD National Program Office at [gpdgrants@va.gov](mailto:gpdgrants@va.gov) with questions.