

HIGH SCHOOLS

## **More Ontario students to be trained in defibrillator use**

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TORONTO — Ontario is investing \$1.4 million to expand defibrillator training for high-school students to enhance CPR and other on-the-spot treatment for cardiac arrest.

The program will help the Advanced Coronary Treatment Foundation train teachers to instruct students in the use of an automated external defibrillator and help support placement of the devices in high schools across the province.

The foundation launched a pilot project in 2007 in six Ottawa high schools to train students how to use defibrillators, which can shock the heart into beating again after a cardiac arrest occurs. Defibrillator training will now be introduced in Toronto high schools and fundraising will be undertaken to expand the program province-wide.

Each year, up to 40,000 Canadians have a sudden cardiac arrest, a condition that is different from — but may be caused by — a heart attack. Cardiac arrest occurs when the heart suddenly stops beating and the person is no longer breathing. One major cause is disruption of normal heart contractions, such as that caused by ventricular fibrillation.

About 80 per cent of these life-threatening events occur outside of hospital and survival rates are poor without immediate medical attention. An estimated 30,000 Canadians die from sudden cardiac arrest each year.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada says survival rates could be improved by up to 50 per cent if CPR and defibrillation were performed within the first few minutes after a person suffers an arrest.

Young people trained to perform CPR and a defibrillator could help save lives at the scene of a cardiac arrest, said Dr. Justin Maloney, an emergency physician and medical director for the foundation.

"Easy-to-use defibrillators are appearing in many public places," he said Wednesday in a release. "The schools already teach young people to act, to start CPR. Now we want them to grab the defibrillator on the wall and use that too."

The ACT Foundation, a charitable organization dedicated to promoting health and empowering Canadians to save lives, is calling for a national campaign to establish CPR as a mandatory program in every Canadian high school.

So far, the foundation has established CPR training in more than 1,200 high schools across Canada.