

*Program Highlights*

**The HEARTSafe Community program is intended to encourage all communities to strengthen every link in the cardiac “Chain of Survival” in their community. HEARTBEATS are earned for CPR training , AED availability, and pre-hospital advanced life support.**

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Rappahannock EMS Council  
435 Hunter Street  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401  
540-373-0249  
[www.rems.vaems.org](http://www.rems.vaems.org)

Virginia HEARTSafe illustration by Madison N. Baxter  
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*HEARTSafe* Community

A program for Virginia



**A HEARTSafe Community**

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435 Hunter St.  
Fredericksburg, VA 22401

## HEARTSafe is needed

### Why become a HEARTSafe community?

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in the nation and Virginia.



*HEARTSafe* Communities is a program designed to promote survival from sudden out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. It is a general concept focused upon strengthening the “Chain of Survival” as described by the American Heart Association. The program recognizes and stimulates efforts by individual communities to improve their system for preventing sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) from becoming irreversible death.

The Rappahannock EMS Council, the Virginia Department of Health through its Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program, and the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services (OEMS), in collaboration with the American Heart Association, aim to help Virginia’s communities improve the chances that anyone suffering a sudden cardiac arrest will have the best possible chance for survival.

### **Is the *HEARTSafe* concept evidence-based?**

No studies have specifically attempted to demonstrate improved survival after instituting an explicit *HEARTSafe* program in a community. However, when considering criteria for a new program, we do recommend that requirements should be based on scientifically-supported measures, such as increased bystander CPR, early access to defibrillators, and post-ROSC hypothermia. In addition, the general model of community-level efforts to strengthen the chain of survival has been successful (e.g. in Arizona and Wake County, NC) and is supported by expert recommendations.

### **How do I make my community *HEARTSafe*?**

Consult the requirements established by the Rappahannock EMS Council and follow the procedures they lay out to apply for *HEARTSafe* designation in your community.

Apply for the Virginia *HEARTSafe* Community designation by downloading the application from [www.rems.vaems.org](http://www.rems.vaems.org) or request one be emailed to you. Once complete, return your application to:

Rappahannock EMS Council

435 Hunter Street

Fredericksburg, VA 22401

540-373-0249

Attn: Lori L. Knowles, Virginia *HeartSafe* Community  
Coordinator

## Frequently asked questions

### What the heck is *HEARTS*Safe?

*HEARTS*Safe is a public health initiative intended to help more people survive after sudden out-of-hospital cardiac arrest. When someone's heart suddenly stops, they will generally not survive unless a number of interventions take place immediately, including CPR and defibrillation. In order to facilitate this process, a strong system must be established to ensure the rapid execution of each step.

The *HEARTS*Safe Community concept works by creating criteria that support this “cardiac chain of survival” and encouraging communities to work toward them.

*HEARTS*Safe Communities is unrelated to the Heartsafe patient portal or the HeartSafe America, Inc. medical supply company. Although it recognizes similar goals, it is not affiliated with the Heart Safe Community Award offered annually by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and Physio-Control, or the paid Heart Safe Solution service from Physio-Control.

### What service, business, or organization runs *HEARTS*Safe?

The *HEARTS*Safe concept was originally developed by David Hiltz and Michael Aries in Massachusetts. It has spread and grown organically, and is now considered open-source “freeware”; it's available to anyone with no permission needed.

The American Heart Association can provide some assistance and guidance with implementation, and there is a strong community of peer support provided by existing leaders and program directors. However, each state or regional program is managed independently, designates its own criteria, and answers to no external arbiter.

In the basic *HEARTS*Safe model, a region (generally a US state, but county-based and international programs also exist) establishes a set of minimum criteria its communities must meet in order to achieve *HEARTS*Safe status. These should be goals that support the chain of survival, such as widespread CPR instruction, public access defibrillators, and aggressive resuscitation protocols for first responders and area hospitals. Individual communities in each region which meet the established criteria—such as cities, towns, counties, even neighborhoods or campuses—can apply to their home office and become designated as a *HEARTS*Safe Community. Street signs proclaiming this status are usually posted at the edge of town. If a community does not meet minimum criteria, it can take steps to work toward compliance and eventually earn accreditation.

The first *HEARTS*Safe program began in Massachusetts in 2002. Programs now exist in all or parts of Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, California, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Kansas, Kentucky, Vermont, and Virginia; they have also spread internationally to Ireland, New Zealand, and Taiwan, and are under development in Missouri, Tennessee, and Colorado. Typically, programs are managed at the state level through the Department of Public Health or a similar service, and individual communities in each state obtain designation through that central office. Under these various umbrellas, over 600 local *HEARTS*Safe communities now exist,



## ***QUALIFYING YOUR COMMUNITY***

The number of Heartbeats required to become a *HEARTSafe* Community depends on the size of your community. The larger the community, the greater the need, and, therefore, the greater the number of *Heartbeats* required.

*HEARTBEATS* are allocated for a variety of activities to strengthen the cardiac “Chain of Survival.”

Community Categories:

1. **Up to 5,000 population:** Minimum of 700 heartbeats required for designation.
2. **5,001 – 30,000 population:** Minimum of 850 heartbeats required for designation.
3. **30,001 – 50,000 population:** Minimum of 1000 heartbeats required for designation.

4. **50,001 – 100,000 population:** Minimum of 1150 heartbeats required for designation.
5. **100,001 – 150,000 population:** Minimum of 1300 heartbeats required for designation.
6. **150,001 population or more:** Minimum of 1450 heartbeats required for designation.

Additional *HEARTSafe* Community Requirements:

- ◆ Lead organization
- ◆ Enhanced 9-1-1 system with EMD trained dispatchers
- ◆ On-Going community awareness program
- ◆ Law enforcement and fire first responders are equipped with AED’s.
- ◆ Tracking and management systems

(See application for complete list of requirements and recommendations).