

Frequently Asked Questions About Heart Screenings

What do screenings include?

A typical screening requires parents to complete a cardiac risk assessment form that surveys the student's personal history of potential warning signs and risk factors as well as family heart history. The student gets a 12-lead electrocardiogram, which is evaluated in tandem with the cardiac risk assessment form by a licensed physician. Some screening foundations also have the option to provide an echocardiogram to students as well as a station with hands-on learning to use hands-only CPR and an automated external defibrillator in a cardiac emergency. Hundreds of youth can be screened in one day.

How do students get screening results?

In some cases, physicians are onsite and results are provided immediately, with a note to file them with their primary care practitioner, or to follow up with their physician if a cardiac abnormality was detected via ECG or echo, or the student logged certain warning signs and family risk factors. Other organizations have offsite physicians overread screening reports after the screening event. In either case, results are provided directly to the parent/participant, not the school or district.

Are partner screening organizations insured?

Screening organizations are typically insured nonprofits that present a certificate of liability that can name the school and/or school districts as co-insured when screening on school property.

How are screenings funded?

Screening organizations actively solicit grants, sponsorships and donations to support their free or low-cost screening services for participants, however, assistance from the LEA's local control funding sources may be required to host the event. Screening organizations *never* bill participant insurance plans as that information is not exchanged.

Who is eligible to be screened?

Based on each screening organization's human resources, typically youth in middle and high school plus young adults up to age 25 can be screened. As this is a screening that is meant to provide initial insight to the participant's primary care physician, participants with existing cardiac conditions who are already being followed by a physician are not eligible to participate. Participants do not need to provide proof of citizenship, although youth under age 18 need a parent signature to participate.

What kind of facility is required to screen?

Screenings usually take place in the gym/multi-purpose room and/or surrounding spaces/classrooms on a school campus. Schools can be asked to provide tables, chairs and trash cans to supplement supplies the screening organization brings to and from the event. The screening organization will do a site walk to mutually determine the best space for the event.

When do screenings occur?

Screenings are likely staged on weekends during the school year and can be booked as much as a year in advance, though logistical planning typically takes place 8-12 weeks prior to the event. Sometimes screenings are done in conjunction with a pre-participation examination for sports (PPE) event the school is coordinating.

How is the screening staffed?

The screening organization has a core group of both lay and medical volunteers and paid staff, but there is often room for both student and adult volunteers from the school community to participate. Volunteer opportunities will be discussed at the site walk-through.

How are screenings promoted?

A screening must have district/school-wide support, from administration to teachers to athletics, PTA to boosters, ASB to student organizations. The school must fully promote the screening within its community. Screening organizations often provide schools with a flyer and social media messaging that is encouraged to be pushed out repeatedly.