

WORK READINESS CENTER | CUMMING, GEORGIA

# THE NORTH ATLANTA CARDIAC ARREST GAP

What Gwinnett County Fire & EMS CARES Data Reveals About Bystander CPR and How North Atlanta Can Save More Lives

2026 | Based on Gwinnett County CARES Data: January–December 2025

Data: Gwinnett Fire & EMS Utstein Survival Report 2025 | CARES National Annual Report 2025 | U.S. Census Bureau

<b>407 cardiac arrests in 2025</b>	<b>48.4% bystander CPR rate ▲</b>	<b>17.2% public AED use ▲</b>	<b>12.8% overall survival ▲</b>	<b>12 lives gap to Alaska benchmark</b>
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Gwinnett County is performing above the national average on the metrics that matter most for cardiac arrest survival — and there is still meaningful ground to gain.

Gwinnett Fire & EMS responded to **407 non-traumatic cardiac arrest events in 2025**. Of those, **48.4% received bystander CPR** before EMS arrived — exceeding the national CARES benchmark of 42.5% by nearly 6 percentage points. Public AED use reached **17.2%**, surpassing the national benchmark of 13.9% by 3.3 points. Overall survival to hospital discharge was **12.8%** — above the national average of 10.5%.

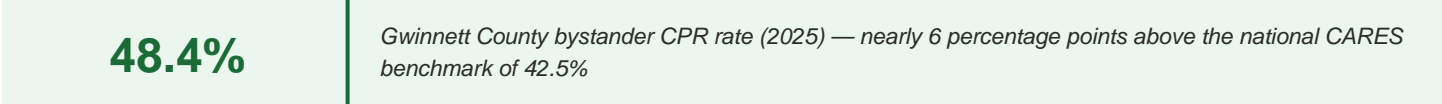
These numbers represent real progress. Communities that have invested in CPR training, AED placement, and public awareness achieve higher bystander intervention rates — and Gwinnett County's data confirms that investment is paying off.

But the gap to the highest-performing U.S. communities remains significant. Alaska achieved a 77.0% bystander CPR rate in 2025. If Gwinnett and Forsyth County combined matched that rate, an estimated **12 additional people per year** would survive cardiac arrest who currently do not. Those are not statistics. They are 12 specific individuals — in our community, in a typical year — whose survival depends on the person standing next to them when they collapse.

GWINNETT COUNTY vs. NATIONAL BENCHMARKS (CARES 2025)			
Bystander CPR rate	<b>48.4%</b>	42.5%	<b>▲ +5.9 pp</b>
Public AED use rate	<b>17.2%</b>	13.9%	<b>▲ +3.3 pp</b>
Overall survival to discharge	<b>12.8%</b>	10.5%	<b>▲ +2.3 pp</b>
Utstein bystander survival	<b>25.0%</b>	37.0%	<b>■ -12.0 pp</b>

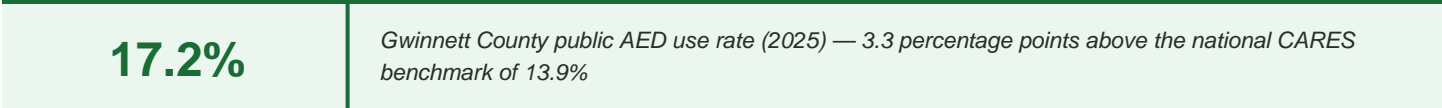
## THE 5 KEY FINDINGS

### FINDING 1 Gwinnett County is outperforming the nation — 48.4% bystander CPR vs. 42.5% national average



In 2025, Gwinnett Fire & EMS documented that 316 of the 407 non-traumatic cardiac arrest patients — 48.4% — received bystander CPR before EMS arrived. The national CARES benchmark for 2025 is 42.5%. Gwinnett exceeds it by 5.9 percentage points. This is not a small margin. Across the agency-level variation in CARES data, where bystander CPR rates range from 15.4% to 81.5%, Gwinnett is performing in the upper half of U.S. communities. That performance is a direct reflection of community training programs, public awareness, and the work of organizations like Work Readiness Center that are putting CPR skills into the hands of North Atlanta residents.

### FINDING 2 Gwinnett's public AED use rate of 17.2% is also above the national benchmark of 13.9%



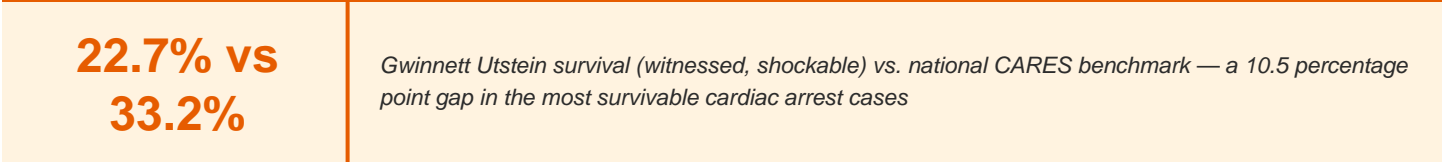
Of all eligible cardiac arrest events in 2025 — excluding home arrests, nursing home, and healthcare facility events where AED use is tracked differently — 17.2% involved a bystander-applied AED. The national CARES 2025 benchmark is 13.9%. AED use is significant because it targets the most survivable cardiac arrest cases: those with a shockable rhythm (VF/VT). The Utstein survival rate for witnessed shockable arrests in Gwinnett was 22.7% — compared to a national benchmark of 33.2%. That gap signals that while Gwinnett is getting AEDs applied at above-average rates, there may be opportunities to improve the speed of application and the quality of post-shock resuscitation.

### FINDING 3 210 Gwinnett County cardiac arrest victims still received no CPR in 2025 — there is still a gap



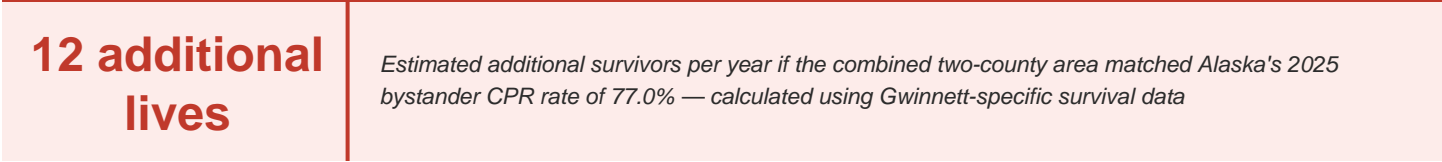
Gwinnett's above-average performance is real progress. But 51.6% of cardiac arrest victims in 2025 — an estimated 210 people — still received no CPR before EMS arrived. Each one of those represents a bystander who was present but not prepared to act. The reason most often cited in research: they had never taken a CPR class. The second most common reason, confirmed by Work Readiness Center's own training experience: fear of legal liability — a fear that is specifically and explicitly addressed by Georgia Code § 51-1-29, which protects lay rescuers who act in good faith. Both reasons are solvable. The gap is closeable.

**FINDING 4** Gwinnett's Utstein survival rate of 22.7% trails the national average of 33.2% — a gap worth investigating



The Utstein metric measures survival in the most survivable type of cardiac arrest: those witnessed by a bystander and found in a shockable rhythm (VF/VT). Nationally, 33.2% of these patients survive. In Gwinnett County in 2025, 22.7% survived — a 10.5 percentage point gap. This matters because shockable rhythms are where bystander CPR and AED application have the most direct impact on outcome. High bystander CPR and AED rates should correspond to stronger Utstein survival. The gap between Gwinnett's intervention rates and its Utstein outcomes suggests either an opportunity in the speed and quality of bystander intervention, post-ROSC hospital care, or both. This is a finding worth sharing with Gwinnett Fire & EMS and local hospital systems as a quality improvement conversation.

**FINDING 5** If Gwinnett and Forsyth County matched Alaska's CPR rates, an estimated 12 additional people would survive annually



Alaska achieved a 77.0% bystander CPR rate in 2025 — the highest of any state in the national CARES dataset. Using actual Gwinnett survival rates (14.5% for bystander-witnessed events vs. 6.5% for unwitnessed) and applying them to the estimated combined Gwinnett and Forsyth County cardiac arrest volume of approximately 520 events per year, raising bystander CPR from 48.4% to 77.0% would increase estimated survivors from approximately 54 to 66 per year — 12 additional people. If the top-performing U.S. EMS agency benchmark of 81.5% were achieved, the number rises to 14 additional survivors annually. These 12 to 14 people are not abstractions. In 70% of cases, they are someone's family member — collapsing at home before EMS arrives. Closing the gap requires one thing above all else: more trained bystanders.

**EXPERT PERSPECTIVE: WORK READINESS CENTER**

*The following are observations from Antoinette Lewis, founder and head CPR trainer at Work Readiness Center, an AHA-approved CPR and BLS training provider in Cumming, Georgia.*

*"After completing our AHA Heartsaver CPR course, students report a high level of competence and comfort with actually administering CPR in an emergency. They demonstrate precise mechanical execution, proper depth and rate, and the situational awareness needed to initiate life-saving interventions before EMS arrives."*

— On student confidence after AHA-approved training — Antoinette Lewis, Work Readiness Center

*"The most common reason people have never taken CPR is simply that their employer didn't require it. The second reason is fear of being sued. Both are solvable — one by policy, one by educating people about Georgia's Good Samaritan law."*

— On why most adults have never learned CPR — Antoinette Lewis, Work Readiness Center

*"Georgia requires CPR certification to graduate high school. That was the right decision. But it stops there. Employers, churches, club organizations, and community groups should require the same. People have to be required to become responsible participants in their community's safety."*

— On what it would take to close the remaining gap — Antoinette Lewis, Work Readiness Center

*"The biggest misconception is fear of legal liability. Georgia Code § 51-1-29 specifically protects lay rescuers who act in good faith. You are legally protected. The risk of not acting — to the victim — is far greater than any legal risk to the rescuer."*

— On the #1 misconception that keeps bystanders from acting — Antoinette Lewis, Work Readiness Center

## WHAT GEORGIA LAW SAYS ABOUT PERFORMING CPR ON A STRANGER

Fear of legal liability is the most commonly cited reason people who witness a cardiac arrest do not act. It is based on a misunderstanding of Georgia law.

**Georgia Code § 51-1-29** provides explicit legal protection for any person who, in good faith, renders emergency care at the scene of an emergency to a victim. The statute covers lay rescuers who are not acting under a duty of care and are not being compensated. CPR performed in good faith on a cardiac arrest victim is unambiguously protected.

All 50 states and the District of Columbia have equivalent Good Samaritan laws. No successful lawsuit against a lay CPR rescuer acting in good faith has been upheld under these statutes. The legal risk of performing CPR is, in practice, negligible. The documented consequence of not acting: a survival rate of 6.5% versus 14.5% for those who receive bystander CPR — a more than twofold difference in the odds of surviving.

## GWINNETT COUNTY CARES DATA | JANUARY–DECEMBER 2025

Source: Gwinnett Fire & EMS Utstein Survival Report, CARES Registry, February 19, 2026.

Metric	Gwinnett 2025	National 2025	Status
Resuscitations attempted	407	140,427	—
Bystander witnessed	241 (59.2%)	—	—
Unwitnessed	107 (26.3%)	—	—
911 Responder witnessed	59 (14.5%)	—	—
Bystander CPR rate	<b>48.4% (316)</b>	42.5%	<b>▲ Above avg</b>
Public AED use rate	<b>17.2% (58)</b>	13.9%	<b>▲ Above avg</b>

Overall survival to discharge	<b>12.8% (52)</b>	10.5%	<b>▲ Above avg</b>
Bystander witnessed survival	14.5% (35)	16.1%	<b>■ Below avg</b>
Utstein survival (wtd+shockable)	<b>22.7% (17/75)</b>	33.2%	<b>■ Below avg</b>
Utstein bystander survival	<b>25.0% (12/48)</b>	37.0%	<b>■ Below avg</b>

## LIVES-MADE SCENARIOS — GWINNETT + FORSYTH COMBINED

Combined estimated annual cardiac arrests: ~520 (Gwinnett actual 407 + Forsyth estimate 113). Gwinnett-specific survival rates used: 14.5% with bystander CPR, 6.5% without.

Scenario	BCPR Rate	Est. Annual Survivors	Additional Lives
Current — Gwinnett actual (48.4%)	48.4%	~54	Baseline
Moderate improvement (70%)	70.0%	~63	<b>+9</b>
Alaska 2025 benchmark (77%)	77.0%	~66	<b>+12</b>
Top U.S. agency benchmark (81.5%)	81.5%	~68	<b>+14</b>

### HELP CLOSE THE GAP — GET CERTIFIED IN NORTH ATLANTA

Work Readiness Center offers AHA-approved CPR, BLS, and Heartsaver certification classes for individuals, healthcare workers, schools, and businesses throughout Gwinnett and Forsyth County.

On-site group training available. Every person trained moves our community closer to the benchmark — and every certification is a potential life saved.

[workreadinesscenter.com](http://workreadinesscenter.com) | Cumming, Georgia

## METHODOLOGY & DATA SOURCES

**Primary data source:** Gwinnett Fire & EMS Utstein Survival Report, CARES Registry, covering January 1–December 31, 2025, issued February 19, 2026. This report reflects verified CARES registry data collected by Gwinnett County’s own EMS agency. Data from the current calendar year is noted as dynamic in the original report; the 2025 data used here reflects the full calendar year.

**National benchmarks:** CARES 2025 National Annual Report published at mycares.net. National bystander CPR rate: 42.5%. National public AED use: 13.9%. National overall survival: 10.5%. National Utstein bystander survival: 37.0%. Alaska state BCPR rate: 77.0%.

**Population and incidence:** Gwinnett County population 1,030,000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2026 estimate). Forsyth County population 286,813. Gwinnett actual incidence rate: 39.5 per 100,000 (407 events ÷ 1,030,000 population). Forsyth estimated arrests scaled from Gwinnett actual rate: ~113 events. Combined two-county estimate: ~520 events per year.

**Survival rates used in calculations:** Gwinnett-specific rates from this report: 14.5% (bystander witnessed) as proxy for 'survival with bystander CPR'; 6.5% (unwitnessed) as proxy for 'survival without bystander CPR.' These locally-derived rates are more accurate for projecting local outcomes than national averages.

**Legal references:** Georgia Good Samaritan law: Georgia Code § 51-1-29. Georgia CPR high school graduation requirement: HB 534, effective 2014–2015 school year. Antoinette Lewis, founder, Work Readiness Center, Cumming, Georgia — AHA-approved training provider. This report is for community education purposes and does not constitute medical advice.

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