

Wellness and Health Fair Planning Guide

In planning a health fair or other wellness event, remember rule number one - PROMOTE, MOTIVATE, PROMOTE. Adapting a consistent theme for all promotional materials will help promote and build awareness of your worksite wellness or health fair, and more importantly, motivate your audience to attend the event.

Remember that different people respond to different messages, so use as many methods as possible to promote an event. Think about how messages and memos are normally communicated in your organization. If a certain method of communication that works well in your workplace, start there.

Promote the event at least four weeks in advance. Consider using a different method or a variety of methods to communicate the event each week. Keep the messages simple and interesting by adding more information with each message (teasers). This can raise curiosity and anticipation. Don't forget that word of mouth is often the best method of communication. Therefore, you will want each person on your planning team to talk up the event (in hallways, in elevators and at meetings). This also works well on the day of the event. Before participants go back to their workstations, remind them to tell others about the event and encourage them to attend.

Here are some ideas to promote your health fair. Remember to pick a variety of methods to help ensure a large turnout:

- Voicemail message reminders
- Table tents in break rooms and cafeteria
- E-mail messages
- An article in the company newsletter
- Banners
- Announcements at employee meetings
- Paycheck stuffers
- Word of mouth
- Flyers on everyone's desk the morning of the event
- Intranet postings
- Flyers that offer an incentive to participate in the event

- Place posters in highly visible locations such as:
 - On the door of the employee entrance
 - In the copy room
 - On restroom mirrors and the back of stall doors.
 - Under the windshield wiper of each employee car in the parking lot
 - In the elevators and/or staircases

Themes: Review your organization’s goals, corporate philosophy and culture to determine an appropriate theme for your health fair. Is your organization competitive, conservative, formal, or fun? What are your organizational demographics – what age and sex is the majority of the employees? Use this information to develop a theme for your health fair.

Your health fair may be a kick-off another event, a new wellness program or an annual event. Consider the season of the year or National Health Observances <http://www.healthfinder.gov/nho/default.aspx> (National Health Information Center). For example, February has Valentine’s Day and is National Heart Month. For a springtime health fair, your theme might be “Spring into Health.” The best health fairs have a variety of activities.

1. Awareness & educational information should be fun and interactive. Some ideas include:

- Self-care information
- Humor & its health benefits
- Back care
- Child safety
- Office safety
- Recycling
- Organic Produce
- Stress information
- Ergonomics
- Recreational safety
- Women’s/Men’s health issues
- Nutritional information
- Dental and oral health
- First aid and emergency preparedness
- Childcare resources
- Cancer & preventive exam schedules
- Substance abuse information

2. Lifestyle information and screenings help build awareness of health risks and provide information on how an individual can make behavioral changes to enhance his or her health. When considering screenings at a health fair, ensure the confidentiality of the results. Most screenings take several minutes so allow extra time for participants to attend these booths, or allow participants to pre-register for a specific time for screenings. Suggestions for screenings include the following:

- Blood pressure

- Body mass index (BMI)
- Bone density testing
- Health Risk Assessments
- Flexibility testing
- Glucose testing
- Mobile mammography
- Nutritional analysis
- Total cholesterol testing
- Hearing

3. Demonstrations and activities can add fun and interest to your health fair. Hands-on learning can enhance awareness. Some ideas include:

- Chair massages
- CPR
- Yoga
- Exercise equipment demonstrations
- Healthy cooking
- First aid
- Emergency Preparedness
- Ergonomics
- Martial arts
- Proper lifting
- Aerobic step demonstrations

With any of these activities, ask if your vendor has freebies. Freebies are great incentives for participants to come to your event!

In planning a health fair, think about what is available to you within your organization. Contact staff who may be affiliated with the following departments to get ideas for health fair displays and information:

Safety

- An accident prevention display
- Fire extinguisher demonstrations
- Carbon monoxide poisoning information

Food Service

- Free samples healthy foods
- Discounts on certain food items the day of the health fair
- Food storage safety demonstration/education

Transportation

- Information and sign-ups for rideshare programs
- Safety belt and child safety demonstrations
- Bike helmet safety

Employee Club

- Information and sign-ups for employee recreational events such as softball, biking clubs, and bowling leagues

Occupational Health

- Blood pressure screenings
- First aid demonstrations
- Back care, ergonomics, proper lifting information

Communications and Marketing

- Get them involved in designing logos and materials for the health fair as well as attractive signs and posters

Travel

- Some organizations have travel departments that may be able to assist with raffling off a free trip to a health place or a weekend getaway!
- AAA – Roadside assistance and travel planning

Leverage External Resources

There are a wide variety of resources available to your organization for a health fair. External resources can include community agencies, voluntary organizations, and for-profit and non-profit organizations. When inviting these organizations to your health fair, provide them with at least one-month notice. Health fairs are a great marketing tool for outside vendors to display their products and services. However, be clear about what you expect from each vendor.

Using outside vendors can make a health fair well rounded and interesting as well as educational. Try not to duplicate services or displays. The following organizations may be able to provide services, information, screening, and more at your health fair. Don't forget to be creative!

Health Plan

The Moda Health Promotion & Wellness team may be able to support your health fair event. They may be able to identify sources for interactive displays and materials on a variety of health topics to help your employees learn more about healthy lifestyles. We can also assist in arranging health screenings for your event.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Health fairs are a great venue to showcase your EAP. This is a good reminder of the services they provide to employees. Your EAP can share the following at your health fair:

- Information on the services available from the EAP
- Substance abuse information
- Stress management information

Voluntary Organizations

Many of the following community organizations can provide educational and informational materials:

- HIV/AIDS organizations and education
- American Cancer Society
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- American Lung Association
- March of Dimes
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving
- Habitat for humanity

Providers of Health Promotion Programs

There are many different providers of health promotion, prevention and education available for health fair events:

- Chiropractic/podiatrist offices
- Massage therapists
- Exercise equipment specialists
- Sports equipment demonstrations
- First aid demonstrations
- Fitness Centers
- Your local hospital/clinic

Government Agencies

Government agencies can provide information on a variety of topics, including recreational activities, in your organization's geographical area:

- Boat and swimming safety
- Drinking and driving prevention/substance abuse
- Park and recreation information
- Police and fire safety
- Wildlife fish and game information

Community Resources

A wide variety of resources are available in your community. Some of these include:

- Restaurants/grocery stores for food demonstrations and samplings
- Childcare and eldercare agencies
- Food Co-ops for health food samples and recipes (Farmers markets)
- Community Education (Community College)

Religious organizations

Health fair organizers should take into account not only mind and body, but the spirituality of employees:

- Spiritual support/crisis-intervention organizations
- Community family support agencies

Local Voluntary Organizations

Many of the following community organizations can provide educational informational material for your health fair:

American Cancer Society <http://www.cancer.org>
American Heart Association <http://www.americanheart.org>
American Lung Association <http://www.lungusa.org>
American Red Cross <http://www.redcross.org>
March of Dimes <http://www.marchofdimes.com>
Mothers Against Drunk Driving <http://www.madd.org>
County Health Division/Extensions
County Sheriff's Department
County Park

4. Create Some Pizzazz. Raffles, prizes and giveaways can be fun at a health fair. It helps build anticipation, participation and excitement.

- Incentives:** You can use incentives to encourage people to participate and motivate them to learn about healthy ideas and lifestyles. Incentives that support the theme of your health fair.

Provide each participant with a tracking card or "Wellness Passport" to be stamped by each booth/display he or she visits. After participants have visited a certain number of booths, they are eligible for a free gift or to enter a grand prize drawing.

For each booth a participant visits, he or she receives a token. The token can be a representation of your theme. The tokens are redeemed for a prize. To encourage attendance, leave half of a prize on employees' desks the morning of the health fair. They must attend the health fair to receive the other half.

- ❑ **Raffles:** Raffles can be a part of your vendors' display booths and demonstrations. Ask vendors to participate when you contact them.

Each vendor can have their own raffle for their booth, encouraging a variety of prizes and giveaways. Prizes can be raffled off throughout the day. Be sure to announce the prizewinners to build excitement!

A raffle can also be held at the end of the day. This allows each participant equal opportunity to win the prize. Decide who can enter the drawing. It can be part of the registration process or can be built into the incentive as identified above.

5. Logistics are Key. When planning a health fair, consider the space you have available. It is best to consider space availability early so you will know how many vendors and exhibits you can accommodate. A floor plan or layout will help determine the setup and space needs. In designing the floor plan keep the following information in mind:

- ❑ **Space:** The space vendors will need may vary. Let each vendor know in advance how much space they will have, or talk with each vendor before designing the floor plan.
- ❑ **Electricity:** Check with each vendor to determine if they will need electricity for their booth or display. Locate the available electrical outlets and place these vendors in your floor plan first.
- ❑ **Screening Tests:** If you have screening tests such as blood pressure and cholesterol, place these vendors together. Also consider whether one test needs to be performed before another. As screenings are considered personal information, you may want to place these vendors in a quiet area so that test results can be discussed in private.
- ❑ **Traffic Flow:** Some booths and display areas are more popular than others and will cause a line to form. If you anticipate this, allow more space for these booths, or place a less popular booth on either side. That way, people will visit the less popular booths as they wait in line. Consider having an entrance and exit to ease the flow of traffic.
- ❑ **Registration:** Having participants register is a great way to determine the number of attendees at the health fair. This information can be used as part of your health fair evaluation. You can go back to these participants for feedback.
- ❑ **Vendor Information:** To help the day run smoothly, send a copy of the floor plan to vendors, letting them know where they will be setting up their booth. Also remind vendors where to park, which entrance to use to unload their supplies and other relevant information.
- ❑ **Wireless Internet:** Confirm with vendors whether they need access to the internet. Have access information available.

There will be changes at the last minute – so remember flexibility is important!

Health fairs offer the opportunity to celebrate health through the use of interactive displays, screenings, games, prizes, and other exhibits. Most importantly they demonstrate your commitment to the health and well-being of your employees. Use the following checklist to guide you in planning your health fair.

Five to Six Months Prior:

- Get support from your organization's leaders.
- Establish a champion within the senior management team.

Champion's Name: _____

Four Months Prior:

- Organize a Planning Committee. Your planning committee should range from three to eight members. Clearly define tasks, with accountabilities and agreed-upon time lines.
- Determine your target audience. Who do you plan to invite? (Current employees, retirees, families)
- Estimate number of employees you expect to attend (25-50 percent total population on-site)
- Assess employee's needs and interests.

Top Interests:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- Establish goals and objectives that create a clear direction for planning and executing your event. Use these as benchmarks for evaluating event success.
- Establish your budget. Health fairs can be run on a shoestring if your primary goal is to increase awareness of local health resources. If you intend to use the event as a kickoff for a new organizational program or part of a health screening initiative, you'll need a significantly larger budget. If your budget is predetermined, then the planning committee needs to prioritize the most important aspects of the event.

Typical budget items include:

- Site fees, equipment (i.e. DVD Placer) or table rental
- Health screening services
- Vendors – some vendors charge to come to a health fair; be sure to clarify
- Incentives – drawing for a large incentive (value at least \$50 - \$100) typically creates more interest than smaller items for each participant
- Healthy Food/Beverage – while optional, having snacks, fresh fruit, and other refreshments may help draw participants to your event
- Promotion – for advertising costs for banners, signs, decorations, etc.
- Establish your theme. A theme creates your promotional campaign and helps focus the type of exhibits, demonstrations, and activities you plan to provide. Schedule it to coincide with a National Health Observance (e.g. February is Heart Health Month; September is National 5-A-Day Month, etc.). Be creative with a seasonal theme such as "Spring into Health", "Fall into Fitness" or a fun theme like a "Beach Party", "Wellness Rocks", Sports themes, or tour themes (think "Healthy Journey").

Three Months Prior:

- Establish your implementation and evaluation plan. Evaluations are critical for measuring the effectiveness of your health fair and helping you plan future events. Process measures include tracking the number of participants and surveying them about the content and

quality of the event. Outcome measures include survey questions about what they learned and if they plan to make changes based on their experience.

- Set date, time, and location. A three-to four-hour time period is recommended for most worksites.
- Develop promotional strategies. Maximizing participation is the name of the game. Use your organization's communication channels to maximize visibility, awareness, and interest in your event. Determine your top three strategies:
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
- Identify program topics and preferred format (education, demonstrations, and/or activities).
- Identify your program resources. Begin with organizational resources and then move to Moda and other organizations until your programming needs are met.
- Contact Vendors. Create a list and assign committee members to contact specific vendors.

Two Months Prior:

- Arrange parking/security services.
- Contact and invite vendors. Allow plenty of time for gaining commitments. You may need to place follow-up calls if you don't get a prompt response from key vendors. Ask for their equipment and special needs. Ask if they can donate any prizes.
- Determine the logistics of your health screenings (pre-registration, # to schedule per hour).
- Design your floor plan. You need ample space to accommodate participants and vendors. Plan the layout to facilitate programming features such as screenings and demonstrations. Consider the following:
 - Amount of space a vendor needs (area of 8 – 10 feet is usually adequate)
 - Determine electrical and other audiovisual requirements
 - Number of tables and chairs to have on hand for vendors and administrative needs
 - Identify a welcome/registration area
 - Consider traffic flow, screening waiting areas, and private places for health screening stations (ex. hearing screenings need a quiet area)
 - Identify demonstration/lecture areas

One Month Prior:

- Promote your event. Promote all aspects of the health fair – such as examples of booths, refreshments and incentive items. Consider the following ways to promote the event:
 - Bulletin boards
 - Corporate newsletter
 - E-mail
 - Posters in high traffic areas (common rooms, bathrooms, etc.)
 - Table tents
 - Flyers
 - Department announcements
- Begin taking pre-registrations for health screenings (if applicable).
- Arrange all food and prizes.

Three Weeks Prior:

- Send confirmation letter to vendors, including map of your location, phone numbers, parking and security information. Ask vendors to arrive 60 minutes prior to the start of the event.

One Week Prior:

- Re-confirm all services with vendors.
- Assign someone to greet and direct vendors as they arrive.
- Review floor plan.
- Remind employees to pre-register for screenings.

Day of Health Fair

- Remind employees about today's event. Be sure to mention food, prizes or other fun activities.
- Greet vendors as they arrive - direct them to restrooms, health fair room, etc.

After Health Fair

- Gather aggregate results from the health screening including the number of participants screened, number of high-risk individuals, etc.
- Review vendor and participant feedback to determine the success of your event. Were the goals and objectives achieved? Identify any changes or improvements for your next event. Keep a record of everything you did in planning your event to guide your future health fair planning.
- Send thank you letters to all participating vendors; include a summary of event highlights and feedback as appropriate.

Congratulations for promoting a worksite health fair!

The Wellness & Health Fair Planning Guide provides information for planning, implementing, and evaluating a health fair. It can assist employers and groups in conducting a successful worksite event. The possibilities for health fair activities are limitless. This guide provides basic suggestions; you may think of others. You may also find that many modifications will be necessary for your health fair. The guide furnishes you with ideas that you and your committee members may change to meet your needs.

This guide is adapted from materials available from the Texas Cooperative Extension. Health Fair Planning Guide - Carol A. Rice, Ph.D., R.N., Professor & Extension Health Specialist, Texas A&M School of Rural Public Health

http://fcs.tamu.edu/HEALTH/health_fair_planning_guide/index.php

If you see or create other health fair activities that help people actively learn about wellness and health, please send those ideas to wellatwork@modahealth.com.