

Health Fair Guide

Health fairs are not necessarily organized by health care providers, and often-times, a clinician joining the committee is a good way to bring current and knowledgeable health care guidelines into the planning of the event. Physician assistants can be leaders or members of a health fair committee. Even if you do not have additional skills such as marketing or meal planning, you can be a valuable health fair committee member, by being a link to the medical community. You can also educate the committee about physician assistants. Since health fairs can be such a vital public relations resource for physician assistants, the AAPA's Public Relations Committee has developed the following guide to help you and your committee implement a successful health fair.

Planning and Implementation

1. Qualifications of a good project leader and how to develop your committee
2. How to generate a theme for your health fair and set realistic goals
3. Setting an appropriate time and location for your health fair
4. Funding and budget
5. How to choose appropriate services, speakers, and exhibitors
6. Marketing
7. Registration of attendees
8. How to recruit volunteers for assistance
9. Food

Evaluation and Follow-up

1. Participant surveys
2. Medical follow-up of abnormal labs and tests
3. Project leader and committee self-evaluation

Planning and Implementation

Project Leader and Committee

Good project leaders communicate with everyone involved in the health fair on a regular basis. They plan and run efficient meetings, follow up questions with answers, and develop a network of people to run the committee. A good project leader directly invites other people to get involved, and delegates tasks to appropriate people. The committee should consist of a small group of people who

have an interest in holding a health fair and specific skills to contribute. These committee members should also be good at communicating back to the project leader and the rest of the committee, to prevent duplication or conflict in tasks, as well as to make sure everything gets accomplished on time.

A committee may consist of the following members:

- . A **project leader** who oversees everything, and helps each committee member as needed. This could also be the person who develops the budget and initially invites others to become involved.
- . A **lab technician** in charge of organizing blood draws.
- . An **office person** in charge of organizing registration, marketing, and correspondence.
- . A **groundsperson** in charge of set up, tear down, and making sure all equipment and supplies are on site.
- . A **volunteer coordinator** who may plan a meal, acquire door prizes, or gather other volunteers to help at the event.

The following resources may be helpful as you plan your health fair:

- . [AAPA Public Relations Tools page](#)
- . [Physician Assistant Development Toolbox](#), which provides leadership development information

Setting Goals

It is important to set goals early on in the planning process. Some health fairs have a variety of booths and services, which allows for any exhibitor or organization to be involved. Other fairs are more focused on a particular theme, such as cancer awareness, immunizations, or health care in the elderly. Some health fairs are organized by a community service organization and others are done by a hospital or medical clinic. To set a theme and goals for your health fair, answer the following questions:

- . Are you trying to include a select group of participants or the general public?
- . Do you have a budget to work with, or are you starting from scratch?
- . How large of an event do you want to hold? How many people?
- . Is there a particular health issue of concern in your community? In your clinic?
- . Can participants afford to pay admission to the event or does it need to be free? How much is a reasonable cost?
- . Are you trying to improve people's awareness of a health issue, inform them of their own personal health risks, or are you trying to initiate a change in people's health habits and lifestyle?
- . Is the health fair at a particular time of year that fits with a theme? Is it in

coordination with another event in your community?

After you have a general plan for goals and a theme, try to set some specific goals that you can review after the event. Specific goals are measurable and objective. For example, "We want lots of people to come to the health fair" is vague. If you instead say, "Our goal is to have 200 participants at our first health fair," then you can plan your services, budget, and space around that expectation.

Timing and Location

This should be one of the first decisions made when planning a health fair. The location should be accessible to the population you are inviting. The space should suit the size and style of the event. The building space should fit within your planned budget. Many health fairs are held in schools or community buildings. Do you need a separate room for speakers, workshops, or hearing tests? Will one or two large rooms suit your needs?

Timing is also very important. Plan far enough ahead (usually at least six months) and find out what other events are planned for that time of year. Try to avoid scheduling with a conflicting event that would draw the same participants as your health fair. Plan far enough ahead so that desired services, speakers and volunteers will be available. The most popular time for a health fair is a Saturday morning, which allows for fasting blood work, but avoids work conflicts.

Funding and Budget

A health fair can be accomplished with volunteers and donated services and be free. Or it can hire speakers, offer workshops, and sell meals. There is a wide range of possibilities for budget, and this will influence the rest of your planning for the event. However, if some of the income sources are not known ahead of time (such as grants), plan alternate budgets with and without that funding. Listed below are possible sources of income, potential costs, potential donations, and a sample budget.

Possible sources of income:

- Health care employer such as a hospital or clinic
- Community service organizations
- Pharmaceutical companies
- Grants
- Insurance companies

- Schools
- Local businesses
- Registration charges
- Constituent organization funds
- Renting booth space to exhibitors

Potential costs:

- Personnel salaries
- Medical supplies
- Food
- Rent for space/equipment
- Speakers fees, room and board
- Cost of services, to reduce cost to participant (example grant pays 50% of lab)
- Advertising and other marketing
- Decorations and door prizes

Potential donations:

- Personnel time and skills
- Food
- Door prizes
- Room space (for example, at a local high school)
- Reduced costs through laboratories or suppliers
- Volunteers
- Decorations
- Equipment and medical supplies (for example, from a local hospital)
- Equipment for finger stick CLIA waved tests (Clinics, pharmaceutical companies, or health education centers will often donate)

In regard to monetary donations, whether you are asking for funding from your employer or a donation from a business, be specific about the amount of money needed and how the funds will be allocated. People and organizations are much keener about donating money if they know it will be used well and fits with their own goals and values.

Sample 2005 Budget Proposal for Diabetes Health Fair in Alaska
(with an estimated 200 participants)

Item	Cost	Possible Source of Income
3 speakers - 1 hour each	\$1500	Corporate grant

Labs (blood glucose, lipids)	\$10 x 200 = \$2000	Participants' registration fee
Dilated eye exam	\$100 x 20 = \$2000	50% donation by optometrists; 50% donation by local service organization
Advertisement	\$600	50% insurance company matching funds; 50% hospital donation
Food - Lunches	\$ 4@ x 250 = \$1000	Corporate grant

Services, Speakers, and Exhibitors

If you have a theme or particular focus to your health fair, you should invite people who can educate participants on the topics that you think are most important. If your health fair is more general, you should invite a variety of people who offer diversity and will appeal to the range of participants whom you plan to invite. Evaluate the cost and variety of presenters, or exhibitor effectiveness, and the value of all services being offered. You should review your goals before you invite any service, speaker, or exhibitor to be involved in the health fair to ensure they will help you achieve one of your goals.

You should make a list of who you would like to present or exhibit at your health fair before you start inviting people. Use your committee to generate ideas. Listen to suggestions from others in your community, workplace, and invitees for people who would be good additions to the health fair. If this is the first health fair, invitations are more successful if you make them directly in person, or with a phone call. If it is an ongoing community event, a letter will suffice.

The following questions should be addressed before you start requesting exhibitor participation:

- Do you want exhibitors to sell anything at your fair?
- Do you want to allow them to donate a door prize?
- Do you want to screen exhibitors and only accept the ones you select, depending on your goals and space requirements?
- Are you going to charge a booth space fee?
- Are you going to charge for some spaces and not others (free for non-profits)?

All of these issues will need to be outlined very clearly when you invite speakers

and exhibitors to the event.

Have exhibitors fill out a registration form, with at least the following information:

- Contact name with address, phone number, and e-mail address
- Type of exhibit or description
- Space and equipment needed (i.e.: electricity, 1 or 2 tables, quiet space)
- Services offered
- Educational materials offered

Speakers are most appropriate when there is a specific focus or theme to the event, unless it is a large enough health fair that you can offer a wide variety of speakers. Speakers are usually selected according to the specific topic about which your health fair is providing education. Sometimes, health fairs will include entertainment, such as music or a dance demonstration. Hands-on workshops can also be very popular. Check out the qualifications of your speakers and workshop leaders in advance, so that you don't have any surprises. Most speakers will give you an outline of their proposed topic ahead of time. You should also ask for references and credentials. Make sure you know what fees will be involved, and that you have the funding to support a speaker or workshop. Make sure you have proper space to accommodate a speaker or workshop.

The following is a list of services and exhibitors that may be included in your health fair. Before offering a service, check the laws in your state and discuss the idea with your supervising physician to ensure that the activity either falls outside the parameters of practicing medicine or meets any appropriate supervision requirements if the service is to be provided by a PA.

Services:

- Blood draws (Lipids, CMP, CBC, PSA, and TSH possible)
- On-site labs (Lipids, Hgb, HgbA1C, BG) with finger stick
 - Blood bank (Invite early)
 - Bone marrow bank
 - Blood pressure screening
 - Vision screening
 - Glaucoma screening
 - Audiograms
 - Height, weight, BMI, body fat %
 - Dental screening
 - Topical fluoride treatment

- Scoliosis screening
- Ankle-brachial index testing
- Foot exams
- Spirometry or peak flow
- Mammograms
- Skin cancer screening
- Depression or other mental health screening
- Diabetes or cardiac risk factor screening
- Hemmocult kits to bring home for testing
- Immunizations

Workshops:

- "Date with a PA (or doctor, nurse)" in which you review results of participants screening tests with them and give brief intervention advice. Again, if the service is provided by a PA, make sure that any applicable state requirements are met.
- Meal planning or cooking workshops
- Musculoskeletal screening or workshops, such as preventing injuries in sports or how to have good posture
- CPR or First Aide classes
- Stress management
- Safety workshops such as: bicycle safety with free bike helmets and bike rodeo; fire safety with free smoke alarms and fire extinguisher practice; water safety with practice in a pool

Booths:

Many health fairs also have booths that are informative about a health care issue or service, but don't offer any particular service. These are often not as well attended as booths that offer a service. For informational booths, it is recommended that they have a give-away (toy, gift certificate, food) or interactive tool to draw attention. Free pamphlets are not enough to draw participants to a booth.

Other booths you may want at your health fair could include the following:

- Alternative medicine information or local services
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- American Cancer Society
- Other national organizations that have a lot of free educational materials
- Local health education organizations
- Exercise clubs or groups

- Weight loss groups or clubs
- Local support groups (cancer, breastfeeding, alcohol, etc.)
- Physical therapists, chiropractors, massage therapy, others
- Mental health services/counselors
- Disability services
- Senior service groups or services
- Hospice
- Hospitals and health care clinics
- Health care education programs
- Community service groups
- Pet or music therapy
- Fire department
- Emergency medical services
- Coast Guard or military
- Family planning, STD prevention
- Domestic violence/Shelters
- Home health
- Occupational health
- Public health department
- Demonstration of new equipment or telemedicine
- Physician assistant organization!

Marketing

Marketing for a health fair involves networking, asking for funding and donations, inviting presenters, exhibitors and volunteers to help, and advertising for participants.

Networking is probably the most important aspect of marketing and should be considered an ongoing process. Since, health fairs generally involve multiple businesses, clinics, and community groups, be sure to provide yourself with plenty of time for inviting all the various health care entities you want contributing and participating in the health fair. Always be sure to follow up on any potential lead and consider all suggestions from the health care entities that are involved in the health fair.

Another extremely important aspect of marketing involves getting participants to the health fair. Once you have decided on your target audience you need to develop a plan for best reaching these people within the community. A great source of

information can be business people who have done local advertising. They will know the most effective means to generate interest. You may also use the network of people you have developed in planning the fair to help you to directly invite patients, clients, or friends to attend. In most communities, the most cost-effective way to advertise is with a combination of direct invites, posters and fliers, and newspaper articles and/or advertisements. In some communities, a local radio station may provide effective publicity for the health fair. Television advertisements are also a potential source of publicity but generally are very expensive. If you intend on inviting attendees from only your own patient population (at a clinic), mailed invites are appropriate.

Do not wait until the last minute to advertise because people plan ahead for these health care services. Usually three to four weeks ahead of time is sufficient for people to be notified, but not too early to plan ahead for lab work or other health care screenings. In your advertising, appeal to people's interest with details of what will be provided at the health fair. Let them know the cost of labs, what services are free and, what speakers and topics will be presented. Make sure they know when, where, and what time the event will happen.

Registration

There are many reasons to have people register for a health fair. If you are doing lab work, you will need to have a method of registering participants for the labs, so that you can mail results. You may want a list of addresses, so that you can invite people next year. You may be tracking your own patient population of diabetics and want to see what effect the health fair had on their diabetes control. You may just want to know how many people attended to justify the funds that were contributed for the event.

Pre-registration can be helpful, especially if you have a door charge or are scheduling people for services or talks at the health fair. It can be helpful for encouraging attendance at the fair because if a person has already paid, they will usually attend the event. If you do a pre-registration, have one person in charge of collecting all of the pre-registration forms and money. Set up an easy-to-use list to check off when people arrive the morning of the health fair. There should be an advantage of quick entry into the fair for someone who is pre-registered.

Registration at the door can also work well. As people come in the door, have plenty of greeters, who can get them registered or counted, give them directions,

and give them any hand-outs you may have pre-packaged for the event. Hand-outs may include: bags to collect stuff, pen or pencil, speaker outline, map of booths, schedule of events, list of sponsors, brief health information, and an exit evaluation form to complete (have an obvious place to put these when they leave). Effective ways for counting attendees include having them sign in, or giving them a sticker or wristband, and then counting how many you gave out after the event has concluded.

One effective way to get participants to go to more booths is to have a card which has all the booths on it, and when they go to that booth, they get a sticker. A completed card may entitle that person to a door prize. Another method to encourage participation is to make a list of all the services a person can get at the fair and space to write in the results. As they go around to each booth, the screener writes in blood pressure, vision, blood sugar results, etc. If you are tracking your own patient population, you will want copies of these before the patient leaves, or an exit interview to review results. Otherwise, participants can bring this form with them and follow up with their regular medical provider.

Volunteers

Most health fairs require a number of personnel to carry out the variety of services and tasks involved. A business may completely sponsor a health fair and use employees to run the event. However, most health fairs involve a number of volunteers. This also helps create a fair in which services can be offered for free or low cost to participants.

Asking for help from various sources will get more people involved in the health fair. Be sure to ask early and match volunteers with their interests and skills. The following is a list of ideas of where to get volunteers:

- Your committee members
- Co-workers
- Network with other health entities in your community
- Community service organizations
- Schools
- Children's clubs and groups
- Churches
- Retired health care personnel
- Emergency medical technicians
- Entertainment (music, drama, dance, exercise .)

Make sure all volunteers know when they need to be there, what they need to bring, and what they will be doing.

Food

Food, door prizes and other freebies are an attraction to an event. You can sell food, have a workshop where people put together their own food, or get donations to give away food. Try to offer food which is healthy, since it is a health fair! At least offer snacks to people who are getting blood draws, and lunches to the volunteers, exhibitors, and speakers.

Evaluation and Follow-up

Participant Surveys

Many events that we attend as students and health care providers ask attendees to complete a survey providing sponsors with our thoughts and an evaluation of the event. Surveys can be very easy or very difficult, and some survey formats fit with some events better than others. People have different styles, some preferring numbers and scales, and others preferring to make comments. The following are some brief suggestions about creating a usable survey:

- . Make it short, usually one page or less.
- . Make sure people have a pen or pencil and an obvious place to return the survey.
- . Use your goals to guide what you include in the survey.
 - . To determine which services people used and/or which booths they visited, create a checklist with yes/no answers.
 - . To determine attendees' favorite and least favorite booths create another checklist or a space for ranking booths.
 - . To determine attendees' opinions on specific speakers create a questionnaire with very specific questions, such as, "Was the talk too easy, just right, or too hard for you to understand?" rather than open-ended questions, such as, "Did you like him/her?"
- . Leave room for additional comments.
- . Have a designated person collect the surveys, review them, and summarize results prior to the follow up committee meeting.

Medical Follow-up

It is important to have a plan for how you will handle participants with abnormal labs or screening tests at the fair. Unless the attendees are all part of your own medical practice, decide how you are going to advise people who are part of the general public.

Here are some suggestions:

- At each booth, clearly state normal and abnormal results.
- Ensure the booth or service attendants are knowledgeable enough to advise attendees of abnormal results.
- Have a check out station in which a physician assistant or other medical provider reviews test results with the participant before they leave, and offers brief advice and recommendations for follow up.
- Invite people into your medical practice, if you are trying to increase your patient numbers.
- Have a hand-out when participants enter the fair that clearly states " Normal " results for the various tests they will be doing. You can provide brief explanations of the significance of different tests, and advice about what to do if a test is abnormal. This can be as simple as, "If you have a test result which is not 'Normal,' we suggest that you schedule a follow up appointment with your regular medical provider."
- Send a form letter out with lab results explaining each lab test, and recommending follow up if a test is abnormal.
- Call patients with very abnormal lab results (especially if they are from your own medical practice) and suggest scheduling a follow-up appointment.
- Ask participating mammogram departments, laboratories, and other agencies about any pre-existing protocols for follow-up.

Project Leader and Committee Self-evaluation

Gathering and summarizing data is a significant task when evaluating the success of a health fair. Analyzing the success of an event is insufficient if only reviewing a handful of comments or feelings, and will not allow for improvement when planning future events. Important data to gather and review include the following:

- Demographics of attendees, including age, sex, insurance, last visit to a health care provider, etc.
- Which services, booths, or talks were attended the most or least?
- What did people like or not like?

- What did people learn?
- What needs improvement?
- What health problems or abnormal tests were identified?
- How did people hear about the fair?
- Where did your funding come from, where was it spent?

Did you make an impact on patients who attended the fair? It may be useful to track a group of participants according to measurable health outcomes, such as blood pressure, blood sugar, lipids, and weight to determine if these outcomes improved after attending the health fair. You can also record statistics such as how many attendees received flu shots, how many uninsured people attended the fair, or another pre-determined goal.

Use these statistics to help you plan for future health fair events. Be flexible enough to learn from things that did not work. You may discover that 60 percent of the people came because their health care provider or friend invited them, 35 percent saw a newspaper ad, and only 5 percent heard a radio advertisement. It may not be worth doing a radio ad at the next event, or you may discover that the advertisement was simply broadcast at a bad time of day.

Make your notes shortly after the event, while everything is fresh in your mind.

Finally, remember to congratulate and thank all your volunteers and committee for a job well done. Have fun, and let other PAs, your constituent organization, and your workplace know about your community service.