



# How to Organize a Walk or Run

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## INTRODUCTION

This kit is designed to guide you through the process of planning and executing a 5K run, jog or walk to support CurePSP. In this packet, there is a template for a timeline, a planning guide, and a committee task sheet for you to reference as a guide. The following guide is not all-inclusive however, and you may want to add your own items.

The beauty of a 5K is that you don't have to have a large group of expert runners to hold a successful event. A race can be a quieter event with walkers and a large occasion with enthusiasts depending on the ambitions of the attendees.

When possible it is recommended that you hold a 5K in conjunction with an events organization that already has channels available for involved in permitting, course design, chip timing, and other legal considerations. Additionally, the event planners employed by the management firm will be able to make expert recommendations on promotion, insurance, and execution to help you stay within budget.

Also included in this kit are templates to help you develop a budget, a solicitation request letter, and press release. If you have any questions or comments about this planning kit, please contact Jaclyn Zendrian, Vice President - Events, at [zendrian@curepsp.org](mailto:zendrian@curepsp.org).

## THE PLANNING PHASE

### Choosing a Route

When planning a mass participation event such as a walk or run it is important that you first take some time to carefully consider the route your participants will be following. Your choice of route will play a central role in other decisions you make concerning resources, staff size, security, transportation, volunteers, signage, and ultimately the satisfaction of your participants.

When mapping out the course, first determine the type of event you would like to hold. Most fundraising events try to be as inclusive as possible because, simply put, more fundraisers translate into more donations for your cause! If your goal is to be as inclusive as possible that means you want people of all ages and physical abilities to be able to participate in your event.

That said, when choosing your route, it is a good idea to not only look at a map but get out there and actually walk the course yourself. When surveying the road, pay attention to elevation gain, traffic, road conditions, and any other factors that could potentially make participating in your event strenuous for the less physically able. You may also benefit from contacting a local running or walking club for suggestions of routes that may fit your participant's ability levels. Some common route distances for charity events are 5k, 10k, Half Marathon and Marathon.

### Safety

Participant safety is very important when mapping out your route. How much traffic travels along your route? Are there adequate pedestrian lanes that will keep your participants a safe distance from the traffic? Does your route require that your participants cross any especially busy streets? Is any stretch of your route undergoing construction? Will the course be open to the public making it easy for non-registered people to come in contact with your participants?

Asking yourself these questions will help you chart your course around any potential hazards and allow your participants to have a fun, care-free experience on event day.

### Transportation

When choosing the location of your route, also keep participant and spectator access to transportation in mind. If you want crowds of spectators to turn out and easy access for your participants, make sure that the course is in close proximity to public transportation and parking. If your event is not in a metropolitan area, it may be a good idea to hire buses and choose some meet up locations where people can catch a ride to the event site.

## Resources and Staff

The number of participants and spectators you expect on event day as well as length of course are the two main factors that will determine the size of your volunteer staff and resources needed. Here is a list of items commonly used by event walking and running events:

1. Two way radios
2. Rope, tape and cones for course marking
3. Signage for start and finish areas
4. Signage for services and support areas
5. Portable toilets
6. Trash cans
7. Food
8. Water
9. Tents
10. Tables
11. Stage for awards ceremony
12. PA system
13. Generator

Looking at your course map, you will be able to strategically position your water stops, trash cans, portable toilets, concessions stands and so on. When placing these resources, keep in mind that many people will want to gather around in the finish/celebration area after the event so you may need additional resources in that area.

When planning for food and water for your participants, you may want to ask a local market to sponsor the event in the way of donated oranges, bananas and water that you can position along the course. For your spectator concession stands, you will need to determine what types of food you will sell and if you will need to prepare or cook food on site.

There are many event personnel hire companies you can use to hire staff and prepare food at your concession stands, or you could use your own volunteers. In either case you should check to see if you need a special permit to sell or prepare food for the public.

## LEGALITIES OF A CHARITY WALK OR RUN

Speaking of special permits, there are several legalities to consider when planning a charity walk or run. Now that you have chosen your route, have you looked to see if you need permission to use this planned route? You may need to speak with the local council or the person who owns the land. Have you checked to make sure there are no other events planned on your route come event day? Have you obtained liability insurance for your event? Your local Parks and Rec Dept. should be able to help guide you.

Ideally, your insurance should cover any medical problems that occur during the event as well as damage to the land and surrounding property. With the size of event you are expecting, are you required to schedule police presence or request road closures? Have you asked CurePSP for our official logos yet for marketing, promotions and signage? We are always happy to provide these free of charge.

Considering every city, town, or district have their own set of regulations, how you address them will depend on local law and requirements. What we highlighted above are only some of the larger items you should investigate. We would suggest contacting your local council for more information.

## FINDING PARTICIPANTS

### Marketing

Now that you picked an event location and have all of the necessary approvals and permits, it's time to start spreading the word! Traditional event marketing consists of mail, TV, radio, newspaper advertisements and signs posted up about town. These methods can be effective, reach large audiences, and should be looked into but they can come at a high cost. Don't let that get you down though – the Internet has spawned many highly targeted, low-cost, and sometimes free marketing channels that are ideal for creating a buzz about your charity event.

*Here is a list of some web marketing options that you may want to consider:*

- **Build a website** – This is a must. Nowadays, any successful event has an official website where they can direct the public, media and interested sponsors for more information.
- **Facebook, Twitter, Social Media** – There are countless online communities and fan pages out there that are filled with people passionate about the same cause you are raising money for. Get involved with these people and immerse yourself in the online conversation. Build a Facebook Fan Page or Twitter page for your event, invite your new online friends and encourage them to recruit their friends to get involved for the cause.
- **Paid Search Advertising** – Google and other search engines allow you to bid on keyword phrases and place an ad at the top of their search results. Try bidding on keywords such as “Smallville charity events” or “Smallville fundraising run”. Create compelling ad copy and entice the user to click through to your official event website for more information.
- **Submit Your Event to an Online Events Calendar** – There are many websites that will give you a free event listing on their online calendar. Submit your event profile to as many of these as possible and make sure to include a link back to your website in the description.
- **Email Advertising** – Does your organization already have a list of members who subscribe to your monthly newsletter or email announcements? Send your contact list an attractive HTML email with information about your event and a link to your website. Make sure to include “share” buttons in your emails to make it easy for the recipient to pass it on to a friend. Also, on your website, Facebook page and Twitter page, include a feature where the visitor can join your mailing list.

## PARTICIPANT REGISTRATION

Something important to consider from the start of the planning phase is how you will collect contact information, entry fees, and fundraising commitments from people who want to participate. Until recently, most events collected participant data and entry fees in person in the event office with a paper registration form. To streamline the staff workload that comes along with paper-based registration, you may want to find a technology provider that specializes in event management software and online event registration. CurePSP uses Eventbrite as their registration platform.

An integrated online event management system will allow you to build a custom online registration form, link to that form from your website, and collect your participant contact data online. We would suggest that the technology you choose include a merchant gateway integrated with the registration form so that you can seamlessly and securely collect payment online during the registration process.

Depending on your technology provider, the data collected on an online registration form should be captured and stored in a database or spreadsheet that you can log into, manage the data, run reports, email participants and process cancellation refunds if needed.

*Examples of questions that could be included on a charity walk registration form are:*

- Name
- Address
- Email
- Phone
- Age
- Gender
- Emergency Contact
- Shirt size (if you are offering a free shirt with the entry fee)
- How did you hear of this event?
- Number of times you have participated in this event
- Team Name (if you are offering team fundraising)
- What is your fundraising goal?
- What distance will you walk?
- Will you be attending the pre-event celebration dinner?

If you hope to grow the size of your email database, it is very important that you make the Email question compulsory so that every online registration has an email address associated with it in your database. You will be able to use this email to send out reminder emails about changes to the event schedule or important notices about fundraising. Any fully integrated online event management system will also need the email address to send out an automatic confirmation email letting the registrant know that their payment has been accepted and spot saved for event admission.



## DETERMINING GIFTS AND PRIZES

Every participating runner or walker in your outing can receive a gift bag with a tee shirt and CurePSP-related goodies to thank them for being a part of your fundraiser. Try to get as many gifts donated as possible for the bags, and don't forget to factor the cost of the gifts into the participant cost. Offer to place sponsor logos on giveaways in exchange for businesses covering all or part of your gift cost. Determine how many prizes you will be giving for winner of age and time brackets. As with gifts, try to have your prizes donated.

## FUNDRAISING TOOLS

Some more advanced event management systems include an online fundraising platform that you can integrate with your online registration form. What's great about this is that every person who registers online will automatically have an online fundraising website created for them. The fundraiser can customize their website, ad images, set a fundraising goal, blog about their progress and training for the event, and communicate with their donors.

The donor can visit the fundraising site and make an online donation with their credit card at which point the donation amount is added to the fundraisers goal total and money is sent to the charitable organization. Many organizations are moving their fundraising efforts completely online because the general consensus is that people are likely to donate more if they are able to do it online from the comfort of their own home.

## SELLING SPONSORSHIPS

Nothing beats a face-to-face request for support. Use your community contacts and approach businesses that are familiar with you or with members of your committees. Begin by putting together a list of potential sponsors and assigning committee members to approach a certain number of potential sponsors. Volunteers are especially valuable in soliciting sponsors since they will be able to tell compelling, personal stories about the way CurePSP has touched their families and friends. A letter template is available to help you put together donation request letters, but the letter should be used as a last resort or as a formality if someone has already made a verbal commitment to make a donation to your event. Don't blindly send out letters until you have used up all of your community contacts. In addition to sponsorships, consider incorporating other fundraising events into your outing. Awards program advertising, 50/50 raffles and silent auctions are all good ways to raise additional funds for your event..

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MATERIALS

### Budget Template & Sheet

The Budget Template is designed for you to maintain on your computer. Because it is created in template form, the document will open as a new untitled document. As you enter anticipated and actual expenses, the sheet will automatically calculate your total expenses. Don't forget to re-name and save the document to your computer once you have opened it. If it is easier for you to keep track of your expenses manually instead of on the computer, use the Printable Budget Sheet. Simply print out the sheet and write in your expenses as they accrue. Both budget sheets should be adapted to fit your needs.

## Sponsor Request Letter Template

The Sponsor Request Letter Template is designed to assist you in drafting a letter to local businesses and individuals in your community requesting support for your walk/run event. The words in red indicate text that needs to be changed to reflect your event. When sending out the letter, be sure to include a sheet reflecting the different sponsor packages you have developed along with the benefits for each level.

## Press Release Template

The Press Release Template should be used to alert your community of your upcoming golf outing. The release should be sent to newspapers and other publications several weeks before your event date. Like the previous template, the release contains words in red that need to be personalized. Adapt the template to fit your needs and don't forget to change the red text to black.

## COMMUNICATION UP UNTIL EVENT DAY

The key to a successful event is to steadily build the registrant's excitement and anticipation from the day they register all the way up until they arrive on event day. Participants that register months prior to the event may lose interest or slow down their fundraising efforts if they are not engaged and encouraged on a regular basis.

This is where collecting your registrations online will be very useful. Since you have a database or spreadsheet of registrants including their email address, you will be able to send out reminder emails and keep the communication going up until the event. Some content ideas for a weekly newsletter could be:

- Updates and special announcements of developments to the event schedule or added entertainment
- Fundraising Tips
- News and articles from the organization your event will be raising money for
- A training plan for those getting in shape for the event
- Special contests for the post-event awards ceremony
- Free prizes and incentives for those participants that recruit friends to join the cause

*You should also send one final email to your registrants 2-3 days before the event including:*

- Event start time
- Instructions on how and where to check in upon arrival
- Schedule of events
- Reminder to bring extra money if they want to buy merchandise or food at the celebration party
- Summary of prizes that will be awarded to the top fundraisers
- The cost of late registration if anyone wants to bring a friend to the event
- Weather forecast so that people dress appropriately
- List of hotels in the area for anyone who plans to stay the night



## AFTER THE EVENT

You and your volunteers may be exhausted after the long build-up to a successful event but believe it or not, you should already be thinking about next year's event! Considering everyone had a great time, send out a follow-up email and offer your registrants a discounted rate for next year's event if they register for it now. Or offer them a "returning participant" coupon that they can use when you activate next year's online registration form.

Another smart thing to do is send an online survey out to your participants and ask them what they liked and what can be improved upon for next year's event. You can offer your participants a free gift or registration discount if they complete the form for you.

This participant feedback is extremely valuable and will help you get a sense of the participant experience on the ground that many event organizers are so often shielded from on event day with so many administrative tasks to juggle.

## CONCLUSION

CurePSP is here to support your efforts! We want you to know you are part of our family, community, and team so please don't hesitate to contact us. Email Jaclyn Zendrian, Vice President - Events at [zendrian@curepsp.org](mailto:zendrian@curepsp.org). We want you to put on the best possible event!



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