

Helpful Tips for Organizing a Breastfeeding Awareness Walk Event

Planning

- **Think in advance** - You should start planning the walk a minimum of 3 months in advance, but it's never too early to start preparing. Create a list of activities you plan to do and set a deadline for each.
- **Form a planning committee** - It is important to work with a close group of people that can help you organize the event (e.g. Supervisor and Peer Counselors). Set up bi-weekly group meetings to keep everyone updated and to discuss everyone's roles.
- **Volunteers** - High school students make great volunteers since they are in need of community service hours. Talk to your local high school career centers/office to spread the word of volunteers needed for your event.
- **Resources** - Use the resources available to you on the web. Visit <http://worldbreastfeedingweek.org/> for information on the current year's theme and World Breastfeeding Week materials.
- **Budget** - Try to gather as many sponsors as possible. Think through all the expenses and prepare a budget. Expenses may include: raffle items, tents, tables, posters and T-shirts costs.

Schedule the Walk/Event

- **Choose a date** - Breastfeeding Week August 1-7th
- **Choose a location** - Is your location accessible to your participants? Is there parking available?
- **Determine who you will invite** - Once you have a set day when the walk/event will take place, start sending invitations to agencies you would like to participate, including local hospitals, clinics, non-profits and local politicians. Create a list that includes the agencies' names, contact person and email.
- **Send invitations** - Create a standard email invitation and send to the agencies, attaching a booth request form. In your invitation mention the purpose of your event, your program's commitment to the well being of children, women and families and how their participation will benefit the community as well. Set a deadline for booth requests.

Advertising

- **Posters** - Use bright colors and pictures of previous events if possible. Think of things that would attract people; highlight these items when advertising your event, e.g. kids' activities, raffle prizes, music, etc.
- **Social Media** - Creating a Facebook page is a great cheap way to reach a large diverse group of people in your community.
- **Media Promotion** - Create a Media Advisory to be sent out to all local radio, newspaper and television promotions department. Keep it short and sweet: who, when, where and what.

- **WIC Classes and Waiting Area** – Create WIF sized flyers to distribute at all individual appointments and pregnancy and infant classes for the 2 months prior to the event. Hang a Walk t-shirt in the waiting area so moms will get excited about participating.

*Never lose the main purpose of your event when advertising. Make sure people know breastfeeding is the purpose of the walk and how it benefits everyone.

The “Walk”

- **Route** - Choose a route walkable in 15-20 minutes and requires no street crossing.
- **Moderate Pace** - Keep in mind who your public is. There would be a lot of pregnant participants as well as mothers with small children.
- **Registration Waiver** - Create a walk registration waiver to be signed by all those participating in the walk. The walk waiver not only helps protect your agency against liability issues but it will help you count how many people walked on the day of the event.
- **T-shirts** - Providing walk participants with a colorful t-shirt can help staff and participants determine who is participating in the walk. T-shirt may have the breastfeeding theme of that year and your agency’s contact information. We only distribute shirts to adults.
- **Bingo** – Give each Walk participant a bingo card with the names of all participating agencies. When she visits each booth she will get a stamp/signature and can later swap her card for a raffle ticket.
- **Raffle** – Donated gift baskets and purchased items can be raffled. The more items available for raffle, the more excitement and interest. In our WIC agency, each walk participant receives a ticket, peer counseling clients receive a ticket for attending a support group, participants receive a ticket if they turn in their Bingo card, and moms can get a ticket if they participate in our photo gallery for Breastfeeding Month.
- **Banner** - Have two staff members hold a banner and lead the walk.

Follow-up

- **Booths** - Communicate with participating agencies at least 4 times before the event takes place. Update them on the planning, send them event flyers for them to post in their offices, assign booth spaces if possible (map out booth set-up) and count how many tables, tents and chairs will be needed on the day of the event, if requested and available.
- **Build Relationships** - Maintain good communication with all participating agencies, volunteers, and sponsors. Once you have established a good working relationship with these sectors, it will become easier to recruit them for future events.

Assigning Roles

- **Set up** - Booth setup should take place 2 hours prior to the event. Assign staff members to help you set up tables, chairs and tents if applicable.
- **Decorations** - Assign a staff member(s) to help you with balloons and decorations.

- **Raffle** - Have a staff member help you arrange and conduct the raffle. Things can easily get out of control if no raffle rules are set up. Make sure to announce raffle regulations on and before the raffle starts, i.e. one gift per family, no exchanges, must be present to win etc.
- **Walk Registration** - Volunteers can help you manage the registration table. Have them prepare clip boards with registration waivers for walk participants to complete. Once a participant has completed a form they will be given a t-shirt.
- **Photographer** - It is important to have a staff member assigned as the photographer for the day. Pictures taken on the day of the Walk can help you for future advertisements and are a great way to visually help people have an understanding of what the event is about.

After the Walk

- **Thank you letters** - Send thank you letters to agencies who participated including sponsors.
- **Event evaluation** - Send out an evaluation survey via email to participating agencies asking them to evaluate your event and provide suggestions. Once all evaluations have been submitted, use the responses given to you for your next walk/event.
- **Save Information** - Make sure to keep a file of all event information, i.e. forms, flyers, list of participating agencies in a safe place for you to use next year.