



## Circle of Care Health Fair Planning Guide

**Why host a health fair?** Supporting the health of your community – individuals and families both connected and unconnected to your congregation – is a key component of abundant health. A health fair is one way to help everyone stay healthy by educating them about health services, resources and organizations; it is also an excellent opportunity to get the word out about health ministries that your church offers.

A Circle of Care Health Fair is the perfect accompaniment to the worldwide Abundant Health initiative ([UMCAbundantHealth.org](http://UMCAbundantHealth.org)) which is lived out in your church through health ministries and events, such as [Hulapalooza](#). Consider holding the health fair in tandem to Hulapalooza to better serve participants' holistic health needs and to boost attendance; however, if desired, the fair can be held independently, as a standalone effort.

When planning the fair, consider the multifaceted health needs that are present in your community and how you can rise up to meet those needs. To serve the overall well-being of all people, focus on the pillars upon which the Abundant Health initiative is built: **mind, body and spirit**. These are natural categories to use as you identify potential vendors and organize the fair.

### **This guide outlines ten steps to complete when planning a successful health fair:**

1. Form a committee
2. Determine details
3. Establish vendor logistics
4. Contact potential vendors
5. Begin event promotion
6. Recruit volunteers
7. Finalize logistics
8. Confirm vendors
9. Host the health fair
10. Evaluate the event

#### **1. Form a committee – at least 7 months before the health fair**

A successful health fair is group effort! The first step in planning is to assemble a committee of dedicated individuals to coordinate logistics and secure all necessary resources. The committee should divide up all responsibilities and create a system to ensure all tasks are completed on time.

#### *Who should serve on the committee?*

- A small group of dedicated individuals; group size will vary based on congregation, community and event scope
- Congregation members with an event planning background
- Congregation members with ties to health care organizations in the community
- Members of the community who are passionate about healthy living and health care for all



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## **2. Determine details – at least 6 months before the fair**

After the committee is formed, it is time to determine details for the health fair! Gather the committee for an initial meeting no later than 6 months in advance – the more planning time you have, the better!

### *What should be established as planning begins?*

- Goals for the health fair (desired outcomes)
- Vision for the size and vendor focus of the fair
- Date, time and location of the event
- Timeline and budget
- Responsibilities of committee members
- Basic planning logistics, including if refreshments will be provided, if any giveaways will be purchased and all tasks that will need to be completed prior to and after the fair
- Plans and processes for team status updates and meeting schedules
- Recruitment of additional committee members if needed

## **3. Establish logistics for vendors – at least 5 months before the fair**

In order for a health fair to be successful, a variety of organizations with a health-related mission should be represented. These vendors should be prepared to distribute resources, provide a service or promote their organization. Also think about including vendors that can provide an activity to create a more interactive health fair.

Remember the mind, body and spirit pillars, as well as the Abundant Health focus, which can help guide the direction and message of abundant living that the fair communicates.

### *At this point, the committee needs to decide the following:*

- What kind of vendors will be represented? Will there be government agencies, clinics, health centers?
- Considering the types of organizations decided upon, which local organizations or businesses should be contacted about serving as a vendor at the fair?
- Are there any congregation members that may be interested in being a vendor at the fair?
- Is there an opportunity to schedule demonstrations, group activities, classes, etc.? If so, decide what types of activities would be well received and think about vendors who might lead those activities.
- Could vendors donate money or products to serve as sponsors of the event? If so, define sponsorship levels, amounts and benefits.

### *Types of vendors to consider:*

**MIND:** substance abuse support centers, mental health counseling centers, self-defense organizations, arts and crafts schools, yoga instructors, local spas

**BODY:** local gyms, CPR demonstrators, community clinics that will offer blood pressure checks, local vision centers, nutritionists who will offer consultations, farmers who will sell fresh produce

**SPIRIT:** team who will oversee a prayer labyrinth/room, group to organize a station to make prayer beads, members of pastoral team, group to oversee a prayer card writing activity



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Also think about local businesses who might support your event, such as restaurants that would offer healthy refreshments or a cooking demonstration, or a printer who would customize a giveaway (T-shirt, stress ball, Frisbee) for little or no cost.

### *Incorporating a flu shot event – optional health fair aspect for consideration*

A great way to promote health at your fair is by including a flu shot event! The flu affects people of all ages in all areas, and the flu shot is the most important step an individual can take to prevent getting the flu. If you decide to host a flu shot event during your health fair, recruit a team of volunteers separate from your Circle of Care Health Fair committee to organize this portion of the event.

Questions to ask when planning a flu shot event:

- Who will be the provider? (Most providers need 4 weeks advance notice.)
- What will the provider bring?
- What do we need to supply?
- How can we best schedule people in time slots to control wait times and traffic flow?
- What free resources are available from the CDC and Health Department?
- Who will prepare guidelines for patients (outline appropriate clothing, e.g. short sleeves or sleeves that can easily be rolled up, age requirements, etc.)
- Who will confirm that all necessary paperwork is prepared; will it be provided by the nurses/provider?

Questions to ask the provider:

- What is the policy for minors?
- How will insurance coverage work?
- What is the fee for the church to host the nurses and receive the shots?
- What are your expectations of us, as the event host?

### **4. Contact potential vendors – at least 4 months before the fair**

At this point, it is time to contact potential vendors the committee has identified. It is important to give vendors enough time to prepare for the fair and add it to their calendar. Invitations can be extended in-person or via telephone or email.

All correspondence should clearly define the purpose of the health fair, when it will be held and what you are requesting from vendors. Always thank the potential vendor for their consideration and inform them of the best way to contact you if they have questions and/or to confirm their participation.

Inform contacted organizations of their options. Give them information about monetary or product donations and how these donations would allow their business to be listed as a sponsor of the health fair. If you are organizing health fair classes, activities or demonstrations, outline that opportunity.

In all communications, be sure to include the expected time frame for the vendor to confirm if they will participate or not. Follow up with vendors you have not heard from to ensure your correspondence was received.



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When vendors confirm their participation, add them to a list which also captures the contact person's name, their direct contact information, what the vendor will provide, any special requests they have made, if they will be leading a demonstration or activity, etc.

When vendors commit to being a part of the event, be sure to clearly outline how much table space they will be allotted, if a table cloth will be provided, whether an electricity connection will be available, if Wi-Fi internet access is possible, details about setup and teardown times, expected event attendance and any other information that the vendor will need to know as they plan the details of their booth.

## **5. Begin event promotion – at least 3 months before the fair**

The next step is to begin promoting the fair. It is a good idea to start this step early so your congregation and community have plenty of time to put it on their schedules. All promotional materials should share details of the upcoming event clearly, including date, time and any incentives for attending, such as door prizes.

### *Consider promotional strategies such as:*

- Community: Promotional fliers should be placed around the church and on community bulletin boards (with permission), i.e., grocery stores, libraries and coffee shops. Post information about your event on every online community calendar that you can find and send details to local organizations who support underserved individuals.
- Social media posts: Post regular event updates on your church's social media accounts and ask the congregation to share them so that the broader community will stay informed; you can boost posts (even with a limited budget) that are targeted to your zip code as well. Be sure to create a Facebook event so the congregation can invite their friends to join you.
- Radio PSAs: Local radio can serve as a great way to get the word out about your health fair. Contact your local stations, prepare a short script and ask them to read it on the air.
- Press release: Prepare a brief press release which outlines the who, what, when, where and why of your event; send it to all local newspapers, television news stations, radio stations and reporters who cover health and community stories.

## **6. Recruit volunteers – at least 2 months before the fair**

As the event gets closer, start recruiting volunteers to help the fair go smoothly. Volunteers can help with many tasks, such as setup and teardown, registration, vendor hospitality and attendee assistance. The committee should decide how many volunteers you will need based on the size of your fair and the number of vendors participating.

## **7. Finalize logistics – at least 1 month before the fair**

It is finally time to make sure you have everything in order for your fair! About a month before the health fair, the committee should meet again to discuss the various logistics for the day-of.

### *Though there will be many details to discuss, some to think about may be:*

- Tables: How many tables and chairs are needed? Do we have them available? If not, where can we get them?



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- Volunteer check in: What time should volunteers arrive? Will they wear name tags? Who will be responsible for checking them in and assigning their roles/responsibilities?
- Parking: Where should guests park? How will they know? Are there signs that clearly show the way to the fair from the parking lot, both outside and inside the building?
- Refreshments: If there will be snacks and drinks at the fair, do we have a plan to pick them up before the fair? Who is setting them up, refilling them and cleaning them up?
- Needed supplies: What supplies might we need the day of the fair? (Some examples may be pens, markers, nametags, and bags in which guests can carry promotional materials.)
- Giveaways: If we ordered giveaways, when will they be ready and do they need to be stored before the fair? Do we want to prepare any general health information sheets or ministry resources to distribute?
- Flu shot event: Do we have enough tables, chairs, privacy screens and other items the church is required to provide?

## **8. Confirm vendors – at least 2 weeks before the fair**

Hopefully, at this point you have received a response from all contacted organizations about whether or not they will participate in the event. About two weeks before the fair, send one final confirmation email to everyone on the confirmed vendor contact list to remind them about the fair and inform about any logistical details they may need to know, such as time to arrive and parking.

## **9. Host the health fair – It's finally event day!**

Allow plenty of time for setup, you might even want to do this the day before your event if possible, and have volunteers arrive early to assist with last-minute tasks.

Even if you think you planned every possible detail of the fair before the event, it is likely that something unexpected will come up. This is the day for the committee to really step up and ensure everything is going smoothly, especially by quickly solving any problems that may arise. Remember to be flexible, and try to enjoy all the hard work you have done!

## **10. Post-event activities – no more than 1 week after the fair**

As important as the preparation tasks are, so is the evaluation of how the health fair went. Thanking and getting feedback from attendees, volunteers, vendors and committee members can greatly improve any future health fairs.

### *Some ideas to get helpful feedback about the health fair are:*

- Distribute short surveys to attendees on their way out
- Email an evaluation survey to vendors a few days after the health fair (don't forget to say, "Thank you!")
- Have volunteers fill out an evaluation survey
- Host a post-fair committee celebration gathering to debrief the event, discuss lessons learned and note any changes that should be made in the future.

*Take time to breathe and congratulate yourselves for a job well done!*



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Finally, after the evaluations have concluded, another step to assist in any future planning is to compile planning notes regarding all of the work you did to host the fair. This will allow any future committees to use your work and will help them avoid any challenges that you experienced. Consider saving all files on a flash drive or in cloud storage, such as a shared Dropbox folder.

*Potential items to include in your post-event files are:*

- What worked
- What didn't work
- Documents used
- Lessons learned
- Timeline
- Committee size
- Diagram of event space setup
- Budget
- Vendor list and communications
- Volunteer list, responsibilities and roles

*Planning guide references:*

*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2013). How to plan a health fair. Accessed from <https://www.cdc.gov/women/healthfair/index.htm>*

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