

Hosting a Health Fair

A Tool Kit for Pharmacists with Tips and Advice on Hosting a Successful Health Fair in Your Community or Practice Setting

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Introduction

Hosting a health fair can be a daunting task, as a result Michigan Society of Health-System Pharmacists (MSHP) Public Affairs Committee, along with Michigan Pharmacists Association (MPA), has compiled this tool kit of 10 easy steps to help pharmacists host a successful health fair in their community. There are many things to consider when deciding to host a health fair, including the implementation and execution, but hosting a health fair is a worthwhile endeavor. This tool kit was designed to assist pharmacists in planning and implementing a health fair of any size, in any location in a community or office setting. “**Pro Tips**” have been provided in each section to provide information that MSHP and MPA has found useful over the years as well as pointers that may be especially pertinent to use in a community setting. The information in each section has been minimized to the basics when possible, and references for further information and an appendix of examples is provided. Not all of the recommendations in this tool kit may apply to a particular health fair or situation, as you may find that other ideas work better for your community setting, but we hope that the knowledge from years of hosting health fairs will provide you with inspiration and motivation to host your own successful health fair!

Why Host a Health Fair?

Health fairs are extremely valuable tools for providing information to different groups. Health fairs can be hosted at work sites to promote healthy activity amongst coworkers, or it can be held in the community to improve public health with dissemination of knowledge and demonstrations.

Health fairs are an indispensable way to improve public health by engaging your community. Additionally, these fairs allow you the opportunity to demonstrate the value of a pharmacist taking care of patients outside the traditional dispensing role to both your patients and other healthcare professionals.

Health Fair Preparation

Step 1: Determine the objectives of the health fair based on the needs of the community

A valuable first step in organizing a health fair is a needs assessment of the community that the health fair will be hosted.. Through the assessment of needs, you can determine if there are specific themes or disease states that will have a larger impact on the health of the community and determine what partners you have available in the community. With this information, you can develop targeted objectives for your health fair. Targeted objectives may help narrow your focus and can reduce the overall materials, volunteers and cost of the health fair.

- Questions to consider when conducting a needs assessment
 - Is there a specific patient population that needs additional assistance?
 - What is the target population or characteristics of the population within the target area?
 - Is there a specific disease state or screening that could be promoted that is prevalent in the target area?
 - Is there a time of year that would work best for the event?
 - Where would be the best location to host the event?
 - **Pro Tip: Churches, school gyms and senior living communities can be great starting places and make advantageous partners.**
 - Are there any community or health departments (State or Local) that you can partner with?
 - Are there any National Health Observances occurring during the potential time of the health fair?
 - Look up National Health Observances at <http://www.healthfinder.gov/NHO/>
 - These observances can be a great start if you want to implement a theme to the health fair
- Determine the objectives for the health fair
 - Sample objectives for a health fair:
 - To provide immunizations for adults and/or children
 - To increase public awareness of disease states by providing health screenings, demonstrations, educational materials, and/or information
 - To teach patients self-care practices for a particular disease state
 - To increase public awareness of local, state or national health services or resources
- A note on focus groups and committees
 - Focus Groups:
 - A focus group composed of other health care professionals and community leaders can be **very beneficial** in determining the needs of a specific population and the overall goals for the health fair. Talking with a diverse group of people will provide a better understanding of the needs of the population in the target area.

- Health care professionals to consider:
 - Addiction Specialists
 - Dentists
 - Mental Health Experts
 - Nurses
 - Occupational Therapy
 - Pharmacists
 - Physical Therapy
 - Physicians
 - Physician Assistants
 - This focus group should be convened at least six months, but ideally a year in advance of the planned health fair event. This will allow enough time to determine needs and appropriate timelines in the planning of the event.
- Committees
 - Having a planning or coordinating committee may be helpful if the health fair is large or if this is the first health fair. The size and number of committees you need may vary depending on the number of attendees expected at the health fair.
 - This committee should ideally meet a year in advance to make sure there is adequate time to plan the health fair while accommodating their schedules.
 - After a committee is convened, the first step is to identify a chair and co-chair.

Step 2: Determine date, location, and preliminary budget for the health fair:

The when and where are obvious second steps to hosting the health fair. However, much more depends on picking the optimal date than first meets the eye. Picking a date that's too soon may result in a great deal of stress and a poorly-planned health fair that leaves none of the attendees or volunteers wanting to participate in another one again. Determining your budget is a crucial part of the second step. A budget is an all-encompassing guidance document that can keep you grounded in reality or alert you if you need to seek additional funds or donated materials.

- Select the time, date(s) and location for the health fair
- May want to select alternative dates and locations

Pro Tip: you should ideally start planning a health fair 6 months to a year in advance

- See Appendix A for a sample timeline
- Establishing a Budget
 - Consider the objectives of the health fair when determining how much funds to allocate to certain activities.
 - Set a deadline for submission of reimbursement for things purchased.
 - **Pro Tip: identify the person who will be responsible for writing and signing checks if things need to be purchased or reimbursed, as well as who will collect receipts.**
 - Items to consider:
 - Building rental and fees
 - Equipment rental (tables, chairs, A/V, etc.)
 - Decorations
 - Mailings and postage, flyers and other promotional/marketing costs
 - Parking for volunteers and attendees
 - Giveaway prizes or raffles for attendees
 - Printing costs for handouts, registration forms, screening forms, etc.
 - Name tags
 - T-shirts or uniforms for volunteer
 - Refreshments for volunteers and/or attendees
 - Healthcare supplies: Immunization supplies, vaccines, point of care testing supplies, etc.

Step 3: Determine what the stations will be and the layout of the space

For the fair, a very important step is determining the stations you want to have at the health fair, as it will give you a better idea of who you need to contact, how many volunteers you may need, and how much space is required. Making an accurately scaled map with the tables and planning for enough space in the aisles is important to achieving the right flow. This is one of the most valuable steps in the planning process. A poorly planned layout can lead to backups at certain stations leading to lines and frustrated attendees.

- Tour the site if you're not familiar with it
 - **Pro Tip: take note the location of electrical outlets and how many are available**
 - **Review the event policies and procedures for the location**
- What size space do you need or have to work with?
- Is the space inside or outside?
 - If the space is outside, have an alternate plan for inclement weather
- What is the cost of renting the space? How far out in advance does it need to be booked?
- How many tables and chairs will you need?
- Are there supplies that need to be secured in advance? Are you planning on having supplies donated?
 - Make sure to ask companies and individuals for donations far enough in advance of the planned date to ensure you can secure the materials if the donations fall through.
- Are there any other organizations or exhibitors you would like to invite to be a part of the health fair?
 - Contact vendors or organizations you would like at the health fair at least two months in advance.
 - Be clear with vendors or other organizations of what you expect from them in their display or table activities.
- Will you or the vendors/exhibitors need wireless internet access?
- Will you need access to a copy machine?
- Will you or the vendors/exhibitors need access to electricity?
 - If a vendor needs access to electricity, you may want to place them closer to electrical outlets.
- Create a to-scale map of the layout
 - When designing the layout, make sure to consider foot traffic flow through the area.
 - **Pro Tip: Plan for enough space between tables and in aisles to allow larger groups or people with motorized chairs to access the tables and navigate the aisles easily.**
 - If possible, place stations that will receive the most traffic farther away from the entrance/exit to drive traffic through the entire layout and to accommodate for lines that may form around that station.

- If privacy is needed for a specific station, make sure to accommodate for privacy screens when designing the layout.

Step 4: Determine the materials needed for each station

The materials at a station can make that station memorable and provide essential information for attendees on a multitude of health and wellness topics. Determining what you need, and what you have, are important steps in the planning process, as it will affect your budget and what you can do with the station.

This section may also be useful for pharmacists wishing to set up a single table within another setting. For example, the list below may be useful when considering an informational booth inside a farmers market or during another community event.

Pro Tip: when considering materials for stations make, sure all equipment is in working order and calibrated (i.e. glucometers, point of care devices) before each fair.

- Materials to consider:
 - Tablecloths or plastic covers
 - Display racks for brochures and handouts
 - Brochures and handouts (may need to consider multiple languages)
 - **Pro tip: color-code the handouts if using multiple languages. For example, everything in English is printed on yellow and orange paper while everything in Spanish is printed on purple and blue paper**
 - Business cards and holder
 - Clip board with sign-up sheets
 - Pens, permanent markers and highlighters
 - Name badges with extras
 - Water bottles for the volunteers
 - Patient consent forms
 - Patient result forms
 - Extension cords and power strips
 - Candy or giveaway for the table
 - **Pro Tip: Be cautious about chocolate and “diabetic” or “no sugar” candies. To be safe with the weather and to get attendees to take them, stick with regular hard candies.**
- Are you billing insurance for services, or are they all donated?
 - If billing insurance, make sure you develop forms for the patients to fill out that include all the information needed to do so!
- Emergency protocols available when providing patient care services for red flag values, fainting, immunizations, etc.
- Don't forget to *check expiration dates* on any medications or supplies you may have to bring with you!

See Appendix B for examples of materials to consider for blood pressure, blood glucose and cholesterol, BMI and immunization stations.

Step 5: Determine volunteers needed

Having an adequate number of well-trained volunteers who know what to expect, and what you expect, will almost always ensure a successful health fair. Utilizing student pharmacists in health fairs can be a great training experience for students and mentors, while potentially introducing them to settings they may not have encountered before. Volunteers can also be used by marketing the event; word of mouth is one of the fastest ways to get the news out about the health fair!

- Plan on at least two volunteers per station
 - If student pharmacists are participating, make sure the pharmacists supervising the students are comfortable with the number of students they are overseeing.
 - Check the college of pharmacy guidelines on who is authorized to precept their students at community events
 - **Pro Tip: Plan on using at least two pharmacists for a station, or plan for overlap from another station, so students are properly supervised and pharmacists can take bathroom breaks.**
- Ensure volunteers are properly trained to deliver any services in accordance with state and federal laws
 - Persons providing immunizations must have current CPR certification, hepatitis B vaccinations up to date, and yearly OSHA blood borne pathogen training completed..
 - Must also have access to the exposure control plan and emergency procedures for providing immunizations.

Communicate with volunteers

- Consider having a pre-event meeting or webinar to review the event, including a summary of what stations will be available, the layout of the event, volunteer expectations and any special items that need to be addressed. This should occur 1-2 weeks prior to the event.
 - Communication with the volunteers can be done via e-mail; however, it is highly likely that not all the volunteers will read the communication or read it in its entirety.
- **Pro tips on engaging volunteers:**
 - No one should be sitting behind a table texting or otherwise not engaging with the people attending the health fair.
 - If possible, station volunteers in front of tables so they can actively recruit attendees to participate at the station
 - Remind volunteers to smile and look like they're having fun so that attendees will approach the table
- Each volunteer should have an elevator pitch to quickly explain what is happening at their station and why attendees should stop at their station
- Ensure volunteers know how to handle attendees with abnormal results, i.e. elevated blood pressure or blood glucose. Provide protocols for each station on what to do in case of an emergent value or situation.

- *DON'T FORGET!* Make sure volunteers are also aware of the blood borne pathogen exposure control plan. The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs has a sample plan that can be used.

Step Six: Promoting the Health Fair

Promoting and marketing for the health fair is essential in ensuring attendees will show up! Without adequate marketing and appropriate time to market the health fair, attendances will likely not be able to adequately benefit from all the services that could be provided. Utilizing multiple routes of communication is also important to maximizing your efforts in marketing, as people respond differently to the different types of communications. Use these tips below to market your health fair frequently and efficiency.

- Event promotions should start *at least* six weeks in advance.
- Depending on the target population, multiple print and non-print promotions will be necessary.
- **Pro Tip: be aware of your target population's reading comprehension and if they potentially speak English as a second language. You should aim for a third grade reading level in all your promotions to the community, and may need to publish things in multiple languages.**
- Keep the messages in the promotions simple. If there will be giveaways or prizes, make sure to include that information in the promotions.
- Promotions should be sent at least once every week, but also consider a variety of message delivery types throughout the week.

Examples of promotions utilizing different communication pathways include:

- Announcements in community, church or company newsletters
- Announcements at employee or other meetings
 - Word of mouth is one of the best ways to promote an event.
- Banners
- Bulletin board fliers
 - Fliers can also be placed on cars-just be careful that it doesn't rain that day!
- E-mail
 - E-mail promotions should be sent about once a week; more frequently tends to promote email fatigue, but any less frequently, and your audience may forget about the event!
 - E-mails should also be sent the day before and the day of the event
 - **Pro Tip: Try sending e-mails on different days of the week and during different times. Most people tend to check their personal email in the evenings or around lunch time.**
- Letters from community leaders or senior managers
- Posters placed by employee entrance doors, copy rooms, elevators and/or stairways, and restroom mirrors or doors.
- Telephone messages
- Radio or press release
- Table tents placed in break rooms or cafeterias

- Social media
 - Facebook has the most users and has the ability to reach the most people of any social media site. When using Facebook, try to target groups and general status updates.
 - Use your volunteers to help spread the word. Ask them to share links and status updates promoting the event.
 - Twitter has a 140 character limit, so links to URL and short promotion of the theme or giveaways work best here.
 - **Pro Tip: Pictures work best for preserving the message, so upload a JPEG of the flier with the status update for both Facebook and Twitter.** Check with Facebook and Twitter for the appropriate size and resolution to upload.

The Day of the Health Fair

Step 7: Set up

- Set up the night before if possible. If it's not possible to set up the night before, plan on arriving with ample time to set up before the event.
 - **Pro Tip: add at least an additional half hour to how long you think it will take to set up. It is always better to have time to send someone out to pick up something you forgot than to have stations that can't function while the health fair is starting.**
- Plan on having a brief on-site orientation before the event
 - Ask volunteers to arrive at least 30 minutes before the scheduled start time of the event to help with set up and to allow time for an on-site orientation, as well as to welcome any early arrivals.
- Review with the volunteers the process for how to handle attendees with abnormal results, i.e. elevated blood pressure or blood glucose that requires immediate medical attention.
- Review times volunteers are signed up for each station and provide a mechanism for volunteer feedback about the event

Step 8: Conducting the health fair

- Welcome attendees, any special guests or speakers and have attendees sign in
- Provide attendees with a listing of health fair events and available activities
- Ask attendee to fill out evaluation of the health fair prior to leaving
- Take pictures, but make sure to get a release from attendees who are in the pictures
 - See Appendix C for sample media release
- **Pro Tip: if you have an email sign-up sheet, write down a few names and emails on the sheet, even if they're fake. Most people don't like to be the first to sign up.**

Step 9: Tear down

- Take inventory of equipment and pack related items together.
 - **Pro Tip: Clearly label boxes and include an inventory sheet with each of the boxes. This will make inventory for the next fair much easier.**
- Note: any objects that need additional attention, put these in a special location, i.e. if any equipment broke, or needs to be recalibrated, take care to put that in a separate location to be dealt with after the event.
- Clean any equipment before packing it away
- Return any borrowed equipment
- If evaluations were conducted, collect all of them
- Dispose of sharps only in a sharps container and non-sharps in the trash appropriately. Sharps containers must be handled and returned to the appropriate location(s) following the event.

Post-Health Fair

Step 10: Post- event

- Send thank you notes to all volunteers and any donors or exhibitors
 - **Pro Tip: Thank you notes are a great vehicle to also send out evaluations. It lets volunteers know that not only were they appreciated, their feedback is also appreciated.**
- Create a brief write up of the event which can be sent out to the press or to the affiliated association
- Review evaluations and reflect on what went well and what could use improvement for the next fair.
- May want to schedule a post-event committee meeting to discuss feedback and changes for the following year while the information is still fresh on your mind.

Appendix A

Sample Timelines

- Sample timeline, provided by BCBS of Illinois
 - 6 months before the health fair:
 - Establish goals and objectives
 - Select a planning committee chair and members
 - Identify the target audience
 - Select a theme, if necessary
 - Select a date and time
 - Select and reserve the location
 - Identify possible services, information , exhibits and activities
 - Prepare a budget
 - 3 to 6 months before the health fair:
 - Establish timelines
 - Confirm commitments from exhibitors, health care providers, vendors, etc.
 - Send exhibitor/vendor invitation letter
 - Secure volunteers to help with:
 - Clerical duties
 - Registration
 - Evaluation form collection
 - Setup/cleanup
 - Hospitality
 - Photography
 - Select the health screenings and services to be offered
 - Reserve the rental equipment
 - Reserve the audiovisual equipment
 - Reserve the tables and chairs
 - 3 months before the health fair
 - Order educational and promotional materials
 - Plan and begin securing prizes, decorations, goodie bags, giveaways, etc.
 - Reserve trash receptacles
 - Customize promotional communications (posters, flies, e-mails, etc.)
 - Duplicate printed materials: registration and evaluation forms
 - Seek confirmation from exhibitors, providers, vendors and volunteers
 - Ask exhibitors to bring special equipment: extension cords, three-prong adaptors, etc.
 - Provide exhibitors with written confirmation of:
 - Date of the event
 - Service or activity to be provided by the exhibitor
 - Time to set up booth
 - Time health fair is open to the public
 - Map and directions to the health fair

- General guidelines including security, check-in and parking
 - Title for their booth signs
- 1 month before the health fair:
 - Meet with committee members to review progress toward implementation of plans
 - Publicize the event with fliers, posters, etc.
 - Finalize booths, exhibits
 - Prepare map for exhibitors and participants
 - Send final information to exhibitors that includes:
 - List of participating agencies and activities
 - Parking information
 - Security check-in instructions
 - Name and phone number of contact for the day of the health fair
 - Make a list of items still needing to be purchased
 - Develop a “Prepared for Anything Kit” that includes:
 - Office supplies
 - Extension cords
 - Tape
 - Hammer, nails, pliers and screwdriver
 - Batteries
 - First-aid kit
 - Trash bags
 - Paper towels and tissues
 - Camera for volunteer photographer
 - Exhibitor/vendor contact list
- 1 week before the health fair
 - Final confirmation with all the exhibitors
 - Print map of exhibits and program
 - Prepare exhibitors and volunteer’s name tags
 - Prepare a list of where volunteers will be assigned the day of the health fair
 - Plan for 1-2 management personnel to be available to handle emergencies
 - Finalize plan for the registration table and the registration process
 - Finalize plan for staffing, including command center table
 - Finalize plan for evaluation: distribution and collection
- Day before the health fair
 - Set up the tables, booths, exhibits, chairs, etc.
 - Set up the registration table:
 - Sign-in /registration sheets with addresses and phone numbers
 - Plenty of pens and pencils for participants
 - Map of exhibits and programs, if applicable

- “Goodie bags” for giveaways
 - Assignment list for volunteers
- Label the command center table and equip with the “Prepared for Anything Kit”
- Set up the evaluation area, including forms for exhibitors and participants, and the receptacles for form return
- Set up the food area, including refreshments for exhibitors
- Check to ensure sufficient electrical cords, outlets, AV equipment, etc.
- Day of the health fair
 - Be ready to arrive one hour before exhibitors are to arrive
 - Greet and direct exhibitors to their assigned tables
 - Direct and instruct the volunteers
 - Collect registrations
 - Check with exhibitors periodically to assess needs
 - Collect evaluations
 - Clean up
 - Estimate attendance
- Follow-up after the health fair
 - Send thank-you letters to the exhibitors and volunteers
 - Check with health agencies doing the screenings to make sure follow-up is done for all lab results
 - Tabulate evaluation results
 - Conduct committee debriefing meeting
 - Report results to senior management and exhibitors, as appropriate

Appendix B

Sample materials needed for:

- Blood pressure screenings
 - Blood pressure cuffs, including extended and child-size cuffs for larger and smaller adults
 - Cards to provide to the patient with blood pressure reading
- Blood glucose or cholesterol screenings
 - Consent forms
 - Sharps containers
 - Lancets
 - Blood glucose meters
 - Glucose meter test strips
 - Glucose meter calibration liquid
 - Table-top absorptive/protective pad for each station at the table
 - Blood spill kits
 - Paper towel
 - Facial tissue
 - Alcohol swabs
 - Cotton balls or gauze
 - Non-latex gloves (S, M, L and XL)
 - Hand sanitizer
 - Band-Aids
 - Trash cans
 - Trash bags
- BMI
 - Scales and tape measures to measure height and weight
 - **Pro Tip: if measuring height and weight, ensure patient privacy so that no other participants may accidentally see the results.**
- Immunizations
 - Consent form
 - Appropriate size and gauge syringes
 - Sharps containers
 - Epinephrine auto injector for allergic reactions and emergency kit which includes other potential medications needed as well.
 - Exposure control plan binder
 - Immunization record cards for patient
 - Paper towel
 - Facial tissue
 - Alcohol swabs
 - Cotton balls or gauze
 - Non-latex gloves (S, M, L and XL)
 - Hand sanitizer

- Band-Aids
- Trash cans
- Trash bags
- Cooler with thermometer to keep vaccines at appropriate temperatures
- Privacy screens

Appendix C

Media release

- Individual forms or a poster display

Press Release

- A press release is a document that is created to be sent to media outlets to communicate an event that is taking place or to communicate the details and success of an event that already occurred. Please see the sample below and use it to create a press release of your own.

Sample News Release/Template

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Month Day, Year

Contact: Name, Title

Phone Number

Title

Press release description in two sentences.

Include paragraphs that describe the event and give informative details such as where, why and who. Discuss the importance of the event and provide details that describe the event last year and the success it had. Write about why these kinds of events are important and what they do for the community. If you can provide quotes, that is great too!

Background information about organizations/professionals involved.

References and Resources

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