

Empower People with Knowledge: Community Outreach Stroke Awareness Event Planning Toolkit



WISCONSIN COVERDELL
STROKE PROGRAM

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OVERVIEW

Each minute counts when treating a patient afflicted with stroke. Stroke is the fifth leading cause of death in the U.S. and a leading cause of disability. More than 795,000 people have a stroke each year in the U.S., meaning one stroke occurs every 40 seconds (CDC, 2014). It is incumbent on the community to recognize the early signs of stroke and alert emergency medical services. Timely response is key to saving a stroke patient's life.

Before medical care begins for those experiencing a stroke, they are reliant on those around them to recognize the signs and take proper action. It is vital that the community is educated on recognizing these symptoms and learns how to prevent them.

This toolkit was developed to help organize community awareness events about stroke. The tools in this guide can be used across many disease spectrums; however, the community education resources cited in this toolkit are stroke-specific.

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For more information about the national and statewide stroke programs, see:

- Paul Coverdell National Acute Stroke Registry: www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/programs/stroke_registry.htm
- Wisconsin Coverdell Stroke Program: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/coverdell.htm>

Planning an Event

Have the answer to these questions in mind before you begin planning your stroke awareness event.

- What message do I want to convey through the event?
- Who can help me plan, host, and facilitate such an event?
- Who is my audience?
- What resources does my organization have—manpower, budget, etc.?
- Are there other individuals and organizations in my community that can be utilized for collaboration? (These organizations may be commercial, nonprofit, faith-based, and/or governmental.)

Setting Up a Planning Team or Committee

Once you've decided to hold an event, gather a planning team or committee of people within your own organization, as well as within other community organizations that might have an interest in the area. Consider including individuals who are health care team members, stroke survivors, and caregivers of stroke survivors—their perspectives will be a valuable asset to your planning.

Individuals with the following skills and experience should be recruited for the committee:

- Strong leadership skills (Committee Chair)
- An eye for detail (Logistics)
- The ability to raise money, if funds aren't available for the event (Development)
- Media relations experience (Marketing)
- Event program planning experience (Party Planner)

Once your team/committee is assembled, you should hold a consensus-building session to answer specific questions such as:


- What are the goals/objectives of the event?
- What do you want members of your community to get out of participating in the event?
- Who is the target audience? (General community participants, stroke survivors, caregivers, children, etc.)
- What resources are available?
- Do you have a budget or do you need to raise funds to hold the event?
- Are staff members or volunteers available to plan and work the event?
- Can you access in-kind services, such as pro bono public relations services?
- Do you have a resource for acquiring free giveaways?
- Should you partner with other organizations to leverage existing resources?
- Where should the event be held and when?
- Will this event be held outside/inside? Do you need to reserve space? Are permits required for this type of event? How many people should it accommodate?
- What type of event do you want to hold? Seminar, health fair, luncheon, walk/run, performance? (See Event Planning Tools for a list of event ideas)

Developing an Event Timeline

To organize logistics for the event, you will need to track who is responsible for which tasks and when tasks need to be completed. An event planning timeline is a useful tool.

Developing a timeline, which includes specific milestones and due dates, should be one of the first tasks for the event planning committee/team. Using a timeline will help you monitor progress toward the event. The timeline should identify the person or organization responsible for each task. The planning committee chairperson should circulate the timeline to all committee members and update it on a regular basis. Hold regular planning meetings with the committee and track progress toward milestones at each planning meeting. If your group is large enough, you may want to set up subcommittees to handle separate components of the event—for example: logistics, partnership development, publicity, and program/agenda.

The amount of planning time will vary, depending on the type of event(s) you are planning. For example, it may take several months to plan a health fair, but only a few weeks to plan a press conference.



The Event Planning Timeline and Checklist is included for your use on page 9.

Selecting Partners for the Event

Partnering with other agencies and organizations can increase the profile of your event. Finding the right partners and identifying the best role for them can take time, but it is well worth the effort. Following are some recommendations when considering potential partners and a partnership plan to outline their roles and responsibilities.

Considering potential partners

The best partners are individuals and groups that share a common interest in your organization's mission, vision, and values. Think about whether groups you've worked with in the past may be interested in being involved in planning your event. Also consider partnering with the health department, community centers, local businesses, stroke recovery support groups, or faith-based organizations.

When thinking about partnering with an organization to host an event, take a moment to determine a clear purpose for the collaboration.

For example, can the organization:

- Reach a particular group or audience?
- Disseminate materials and messages?
- Enhance the credibility of your program?
- Provide technical expertise to enhance your event?
- Assist with funding or provide in-kind services, such as printing, graphic design, or catering?

How do you engage partners?

Engagement works by convincing partners that their participation will produce a real return on investment in terms of increased community and media exposure, as well as networking opportunities.

Building a collaborative professional venture can contribute greatly to an outreach event's sustainability and overall success. Professional partners can fill key gaps and strengthen the capacity of your existing initiative. When choosing partnerships, you want to mutually strengthen shared objectives and capacities to ensure successful events and participant satisfaction.

Developing a Partnership Plan

Once you determine how you want to collaborate with a partner, an effective way to keep track of your activities is to develop a partnership plan. This plan documents all event details, roles, and responsibilities for everyone involved in planning the stroke awareness event. The size of your planning effort will determine how formal your plan needs to be.

Tips for establishing and maintaining partnerships

Once you have your partnership plan in place, there are several things you can do to facilitate a smooth collaboration:

- Choose organizations with the resources, expertise, and credibility your organization needs.
- Consider what roles those partners might play.
- Involve representatives from the partnering organizations as early as possible in the planning.
- Provide partners with the rationale, strategies, messages, and materials.
- Give partners advance notice of upcoming meetings and related activities.
- Create a way to gently remind people of their responsibilities.
- Develop a feedback mechanism so that activities can stay on track and adjustments can be made quickly.



Promoting the Event

Strong attendance is key to a successful event. This is directly tied to how well you promote the event to your target audience. You will want to use every avenue possible to get the word out through media and community channels. Partners and other community organizations can be effective in using their own networks to help you with promotion.

Media channels such as radio, television, and newspapers offer many opportunities for promoting your event. See the Activity and Event Guide on page 23 for details on event planning and partnership opportunities.

Community and organizational channels offer a number of ways to promote your event.

Ask every partner and interested organization to help you by:

- Displaying announcements of the event.
- Including notices about the event in their newsletters and on websites.
- Handing out/displaying promotional brochures at their workplaces and businesses.
- Helping you pay for commercial advertising, if necessary.
- Making announcements/handing out promotional notices at community and faith-based meetings and other gatherings.
- Utilizing local newspaper services.
- Social media advertising.
- Email advertising.
- Encouraging participation at the event by employees/clients/customers.

Event Day

When your planning is complete and the event day has arrived, you should:

- Arrive at the venue several hours before the event starts so you can ensure the venue is set up properly and audiovisual equipment is operating. If possible, conduct a mock event in advance or even the day before to make certain everything is functioning. Consider having back-up equipment in the event a failure occurs on the event day.
- Ensure that everyone working the event has an agenda and knows where they need to be and what is going on at all times.
- Assign an individual to handle all questions from media, participants, and volunteers. For large events, you may consider using an information booth.

Evaluating the Event

It is important to recognize if your goals and objectives were achieved, especially if you plan on holding another event in the future. There are many ways to evaluate your event efficiently and cost-effectively. Depending on how your planning committee is organized, you may wish to designate one person to coordinate the overall evaluation with different subcommittees in charge of the actual evaluation tasks. For example, someone from the publicity subcommittee could monitor media coverage, someone from the logistics subcommittee could track who comes to the event, and someone from the program/agenda subcommittee could distribute evaluation forms to participants and analyze the results.

By asking some simple questions, you can get a good idea of your event’s reach and impact. Here are some ideas for evaluating your event:

- Ask attendees to complete a brief evaluation form at the conclusion of the event. Ask which sessions/activities they found most useful, what they thought of the speaker(s), how they would rate the logistical aspects of the event (e.g., venue, food) and what they would recommend for future events.
- Tally the financial and in-kind contributions to the event that were made by partners, local businesses, etc. This information can be helpful for securing donor funding in the future.
- Track who showed up at your event. In addition to obtaining the number of attendees for the event, also look at who showed up, so that you can see whether you reached your target audience.
- Track how many materials were distributed at the event—both to participants and the media.
- Track media coverage of your event. Scan local newspapers and news websites before and after the event and clip articles about the event. If television or radio reporters cover the event, ask them when they believe their stories will air. If possible, assign committee members to watch/listen to the coverage and record it. If you anticipate a lot of media coverage and have sufficient funds, you can hire a media clipping service to monitor all of the media coverage.

Event Planning Tools

The following Event Planning Timeline and Checklist (page 9) as well as the Partnership Planning Guide (page 20) are tools designed to help you stay organized as you plan your event to raise awareness on the importance of stroke prevention, recognition, and response. The activity and event ideas that follow the guide can be used as presented or modified to meet your community’s needs.

COMMUNITY AWARENESS EVENT PLANNING TIMELINE AND CHECKLIST

Refer to your organization’s policies and procedures related to community awareness events and media involvement in your events.

Actions immediately after the first event planning meeting:

Action	Who’s Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Reserve your venue. If your event is likely to draw media attention, select a venue that includes a quiet place where members of the media can conduct individual interviews with event spokespersons.			
Recruit partners for event planning.			
Plan additional meetings for the event planning committee.			
Create an event schedule.			

Actions six to eight weeks before the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Invite/recruit speakers. Consider physicians, nurses, nurse practitioners/physician assistants, stroke survivors, and community members with a passion for stroke care.			
Request a proclamation from local government officials. (If appropriate, check your company policies.)			
Brand your event. Think of a catchy name, tagline, and logo that will be most effective in promotion.			
Order materials, signs, banners, awards, t-shirts, and other giveaway items. (This is one area in which community partners can be beneficial for providing needed financial support, in-kind services, or giveaways.)			

Actions four to six weeks before the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Schedule training and preparation for all spokespersons.			
Gather/create promotional materials.			
Gather/create an adequate supply of informational materials and brochures, as well as other program materials and giveaways.			
Establish a mechanism for reordering materials if more are needed for future events.			
Establish a mechanism to identify potential problems and track the success of the event.			
Update or develop your media list to make sure that you have the correct phone numbers and email addresses for reporters who would be likely to cover your event. (Refer to your company's policies regarding media.)			
Identify community calendar contacts for all local media and their deadlines, and distribute your media advisory or calendar announcement. (Refer to your company's policies regarding media.)			
Arrange for equipment if it will not be provided by the site. Equipment might include tables, easels for signs, a podium, a stage or riser, microphone(s), a sound system, and medical equipment.			

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
<p>Create a guest list and invite guests. Assure that invitations have been issued to all involved in putting together the event.</p>			
<p>Begin an initial promotion alerting the community to the upcoming event. For example, hang posters in various common areas of the community or in places of businesses frequented by stroke survivors and caregivers such as grocery stores, pharmacies, pediatrician's offices, etc. Use social media pages and email for additional promotions.</p>			

Actions two to four weeks before the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Assure that partners are prepared to fulfill their roles			
Prepare your news release, including keynote speaker introductions, a fact sheet, an agenda, etc.			
Conduct more intensive promotion efforts to ensure good attendance.			
Review the event schedule and make changes, if necessary.			
Create direction maps.			
Create staff duty list/responsibilities roster.			
Follow up with speakers on their presentation materials, if necessary.			

Actions one to two weeks before the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Send out your media advisory. (If appropriate, check your organization's policies.)			
Update your website, social media, etc.			
Send staff and volunteers the event schedule, a list of responsibilities, and directions to the site. Provide copies of materials to anyone who will be responding to inquiries before, during, or after the event.			
Assist speakers with developing their remarks, if necessary. Gather brief biographies for the moderator to use to introduce speakers.			
Check on the status of materials you ordered and make a checklist of supplies you'll need on site such as pens, sign-in sheets, business cards, and fact sheets.			
Continue community promotion activities.			

Actions one week before the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Confirm space, volunteers, and equipment.			
If you will be photographing, videotaping, or otherwise recording the event, distribute consent forms. (Note: consent forms are not required for news coverage but may be needed for taking and using photographs or recordings of attendees. Refer to your organization's policies.)			
Follow up with key media to confirm their receipt of the advisory and to encourage them to attend the event.			
Assemble press kits (if appropriate).			

Actions one to two days before the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Resend the media advisory to your entire media list.			
Continue calling your media targets			
Gather and pack supplies.			
Make arrangements for responding to calls while you and others are at the event. Brief the office staff, update your outgoing voicemail message, and distribute your cell phone number and/or inform office staff as to whether you will check voicemail during the event.			

Actions at the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Greet media when they arrive and give them a press kit. Ask them to sign in so you can track attendance.			
Greet any special invited guests and have someone responsible for showing them to their places.			
Introduce media to your spokespersons for interviews and alert them to photo opportunities.			
Ensure that volunteers are staffing their correct location and have needed supplies. Continue to check back throughout the event in case an issue arises.			
Have the logistics subcommittee conduct real-time surveys with attendees if you desire immediate event feedback. The process can be incentivized with free giveaways upon completion.			

Actions after the event:

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed
Follow up on any special requests made during the event by the media, speakers, etc. They might also ask for data or other information that was not readily accessible.			
Send press kits to journalists who expressed interest but did not attend the event.			
Monitor newspapers, radio, television, and the internet for coverage.			
Obtain contact sheets or prints from photographers and order photos for your internal publications and for your partners or sponsors, speakers, special guests, etc.			
Write an article about the event for your organization and encourage partners and sponsors to do the same.			
Send a letter to the editor of your daily newspaper to thank volunteers publicly for making the event a success and ask the editor to consider it for publication.			
Thank sponsors, partners, and volunteers directly, in-person or preferably with a letter of appreciation			
Hold a debriefing with all involved to discuss what worked and what didn't work during event planning, during the event, and why. Those experiences can be used to plan future events.			

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed

Partnership Planning Guide

Overall Purpose of the Partnership: To leverage existing community resources and assets in support of a community event to raise awareness about stroke signs and symptoms, personal risk for stroke, and how to respond when you witness a stroke.

Brief Description of the Event:

Participating Partners

Organization	Name	Phone	Email	Event Focus

Desired Outcomes of the Event:

Activities at the Event:

Needed Resources

Resource	Provider	Details	Timing
Attendees and Community Members			
Communication			
Expertise			
Facility/Venue			
Funding			
Staff			
Giveaways and Handouts			

Action Plan

Action	Who's Responsible	Due Date	Completed

Activity and Event Guide

The suggestions below represent a range of events and activities that can be scheduled throughout the year. These activities are targeted towards community members, stroke survivors, and caregivers.

It is worth considering hosting several events in a series; for example, a series of events during [National Stroke Awareness Month](#). Continue activities throughout the year to extend the impact of your work.

Potential Organizations to Involve

Individual organizations may find it possible to do some of these events on their own. Other events will require cooperation and partnerships with local nonprofit, business, and/or governmental organizations. Examples of potential partners among local organizations include:

- State/local health departments
 - State/local chapters of professional medical and nursing organizations (e.g., Wisconsin Coverdell Stroke Program, American Heart Association, Wisconsin Hospital Association, Rural Wisconsin Health Cooperative, Wisconsin Office of Rural Health)
 - Emergency medical services/first responders
 - Community/recreation centers/athletic clubs/gyms
 - Hospitals/clinics
 - Nursing homes
 - Rehabilitation facilities
 - Independent and assisted living centers
 - Retirement communities
 - Local libraries
 - Schools/colleges/universities
 - Faith-based organizations
 - Area merchants
 - Restaurants
 - Department stores
 - Home improvement stores
 - Retailers
 - Insurance companies
 - Coffee shops
 - Bookstores
 - Grocery stores
 - Pharmacies
 - Local businesses with large numbers of employees
 - Local media outlets
- **National Organizations:**
 - Brain Attack Coalition: <https://www.brainattackcoalition.org/>
 - National Stroke Association: <http://www.stroke.org/>
 - Centers for Disease Control (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/>

Activity Ideas

Activities that all participating organizations may want to consider for promoting messages and materials may include:

- Disseminating messages through a newsletter, a website, or at organizational meetings.
- Providing fact sheets, displaying posters, utilizing social media, and giving out information containing the website.
- Setting up a speakers' bureau with trained speakers who can be featured at organizational and community events.
- Partnering with other medical professionals at health fairs.
- Arranging for a speaker to represent the issue with media via television, radio, print press. Speakers may include political leaders such as the mayor and city councilmen/alderman or a local radio or television personality.

Following are examples of various activities that organizations and their partners may wish to undertake during one or more of the monthly observances mentioned in this guide.

- October 29: World Stroke Day, http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/General/World-Stroke-Day_UCM_444999_SubHomePage.jsp
- May: National Stroke Awareness Month, http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/AboutStroke/AmericanStrokeMonth/American-Stroke-Month_UCM_459942_SubHomePage.jsp
- May 5: National Childhood Stroke Awareness Day, <http://chasa.org/you-can-help/pediatric-stroke-awareness/>

Stroke Education Resources

For stroke education resources, please visit the Wisconsin Coverdell Stroke website at: <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/coverdell/hospitals.htm>. You may print and customize our community education items.

For more information on community stroke awareness and communication, visit the following websites:

- American Heart Association: <http://www.heart.org/> and search for community awareness
- Brain Attack Coalition: <https://www.brainattackcoalition.org>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/>
- National Institutes of Health: <https://stroke.nih.gov/>
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke: <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/>
- National Stroke Association: <http://www.stroke.org/>

There are several acronyms to describe stroke signs/symptoms and treatment protocols. Please review the web addresses within this toolkit to determine which acronym best suits your community.

ACTIVITIES TIED TO STROKE AWARENESS MESSAGING

Event	Materials Needed
<p>Team up with major employers and local businesses in the area to sponsor a walk/run event promoting awareness about stroke. Create different stations along the way offering more information on stroke and stroke prevention. This sort of event could attract a variety of participants: the general public, care providers, medical professionals, and local government representatives. The inclusion of large businesses such as IT companies, insurance companies, and Fortune 1000 companies in the area can be of benefit, especially if they are able to underwrite the cost of event expenses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational brochures, flyers, and giveaways • Tables/tablecloths for each station • Prizes provided by local business sponsors (e.g., tote bags, t-shirts) • Water stations
<p>Partner with a retailer or other local chain to sponsor and promote a weekend event during an observance like National Stroke Awareness Month. This event could feature on-site blood pressure screenings and stroke risk assessments along with stroke education. Speakers could educate attendees on recognizing stroke symptoms and proper response. Local media coverage would also help spread awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational brochures, flyers, and giveaways • Posters or coupons for in-store promotion • Mic/podium for speaker • Medical supplies/personnel for health screenings
<p>Connect with health clinics on other wellness activities including flu clinics, insurance sign-up sessions, new employee orientations, etc. Partnerships don't specifically have to be surrounding stroke events; utilize your health partners whenever possible.</p>	<p>Informational brochures, flyers, and giveaways</p>



ACTIVITIES WHEN PARTNERING WITH LOCAL NONPROFITS AND FAITH-BASED AND GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Event	Materials Needed
<p>Enlist local providers of services for stroke survivors such as EMS, nursing homes, assisted and independent living centers, rehab centers, and local departments of health. Invite local merchants with interest in this topic to participate by disseminating informational materials and giveaway items related to their mission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational materials • Giveaways provided by local merchants • Posters
<p>Set up a booth at a local fair, farmers' market, sporting event, etc. Invite local merchants with interest in this topic to participate by disseminating informational materials and giveaway items related to their mission.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational materials • Giveaways provided by local merchants • Posters

ACTIVITIES WHEN PARTNERING WITH COMPANIES

Event	Materials Needed
<p>Join major local businesses or retail operations to promote the importance of stroke awareness:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place brochures at HR/Wellness sites within the business. • Plan a health fair around a national observance of stroke awareness and healthy living. • Offer employees a lunch-and-learn at which they can listen to a speaker talk about stroke prevention and recognition. • Take advantage of existing employee brown-bag presentations to promote stroke awareness. Staff a booth with relevant materials and even perform stroke risk assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informational materials • Giveaways provided by local merchants • Posters



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