

Health Fairs and Nutrition Carnivals

Health fairs or nutrition carnivals can be a great way to educate clients while having fun and getting them engaged. When designing a health fair start with a clear understanding of the purpose of the activities and how they relate to the actions or behavior the participants should adopt. Health fairs or nutrition carnivals take some effort and planning, so start early and be organized. The material from this section as adapted from local agency 100.

When it is all said and done, the hard work put into planning a health fair or nutrition carnival is well worth it; especially when the WIC participants enjoy attending and relay all the things they learned.

Getting Started:

- Draft the purpose and objectives of the health fair or nutrition carnival. For example decide whether the purpose is to be an educational activity designed to motivate participants toward healthier choices.
- Choose a theme and related topics for each booth or station.
 - Central theme of “Heart to Heart Talk” for the month of February
 - Booths could address topics such as The Pressure is On (high blood pressure); Stop the Clog (high cholesterol); Pumping Iron (anemia and the important role of iron); Is it Trans or Not (trans fatty acids and why they need to be eliminated from our diet); The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly (HDL, LDL, and triglycerides).
 - General theme of “Making Health a Priority”
 - Booths could address different topics such as Diabetes Prevalence and Prevention; Heart Health and How to Keep it Ticking; 5-A-Day: The Importance of Fruits and Vegetables; Obesity: The detriments of it and how to prevent it; Whole Grains and the Importance of Fiber.

Document the event. Planning and executing a health fair or nutrition carnival takes a lot of time and energy, so be sure to maintain records for future reference. Keep records from the beginning. Taking pictures, having clients complete evaluations, saving a copy of all recipes demonstrated, assembling the booth write-ups in a folder and including a copy of all the handouts that were distributed helps record the event and assist future events.

Planning the Health Fair or Nutrition Carnival:

In planning a health fair or nutrition carnival many factors have to be taken into consideration such as the dates and hours of operation, the location, the number of people expected, decorations, booth operational needs, set up and break down time, requirements and staffing.

Dates and Times:

The dates and times of a health fair or nutrition carnival have to be determined well in advance since WIC clinics schedule nutrition education appointments three months in advance. One possibility is to offer the health fair or nutrition carnival as one of the options the clients can choose for their next scheduled nutrition education appointment. If it is the first health fair or nutrition carnival as a nutrition education event, be prepared to answer questions and promote the health fair or nutrition carnival as a fun, interactive way of obtaining nutrition information.

Location:

In considering the location, know the size of the facility that is going to be used and its layout. Determine where the registration and waiting areas are going to be, where the booths are going to be set up and how the traffic flow is going to occur.

Number of People:

The following factors are going to determine the number of people that will be able to attend the event:

- The size of the facility

The number of booths

- The number of staff members working
- The number of available computers to issue benefits
- The amount of available parking space
- The number of family members clients normally bring to their appointments

Decorations:

Having a health fair or nutrition carnival as a way of presenting nutrition information to WIC participants is a fun, exciting and involves clients in the material being presented. Incorporating decorations that fit the theme adds to the festivity of the event. Be creative and imaginative to create an enticing and engaging atmosphere.

Booths:

The booths' operational needs are a key factor when planning health fair or nutrition carnival's layout. Consider the type of activity conducted at each booth, such as whether there will be a game, a nutrition presentation, an activity such as reading a food label or a cooking demonstration. Determine whether there are going to be food samples at each booth or only at the booths where cooking demonstrations are conducted. Take into consideration the electrical needs of each booth, such as outlets for cooking equipment, a DVD player or any electrical needs of visual aids. It is important to remember not to place all booths with electrical needs in one area as this may overload a circuit breaker.

Serving Food:

If food is going to be served, consider how it is going to be stored at a safe food temperature and how to serve samples. Ice chests, insulated serving dishes, thermo containers and warming trays are just a few

devices that assist in assuring food is stored and served at proper temperatures. Decide if the food samples are going to be served in sample cups, plates or on napkins and what utensils are needed. Another operational consideration to keep in mind is whether there is running water. Make sure to use gloves when serving foods and hand sanitizer before and after. In planning, think about clean up and where the cooking and serving dishes and utensils are going to be washed.

Set-up and Break Down Time:

The set-up and break down time required is also something that needs to be considered when scheduling an event such as a health fair or nutrition carnival.

- Will staff be transporting items to the location? How long will that take?
- How much time is needed to set up tables, decorations and food displays?
- How much time will it take to break down, clean up and put everything away?

Staffing Needs:

In determining who will run the booths, consider the technical expertise needed for each booth. Utilize professional staff such as dietitians and nutritionists to present more technical nutrition information, and paraprofessional staff to run booths that involve games or activities. This maximizes the staff's skills in the best manner. Decide whether to invite organizations that have a similar educational focus as WIC to participate. However, keep in mind that these organizations have their own missions and agendas, and the overall goal of providing quality nutrition education can be diluted when multiple agendas are present.