

OA GUIDELINES



Guidelines for Health Fair Participation

Purpose

An OA display at a local health fair is an excellent way of doing Twelfth-Step outreach work.

How to locate health fairs in your area

Personal contacts can be a great starting point in finding out about health fairs in your area. Your group or intergroup's public information committee can make lists of people they know in the health care field. Another great resource is the Internet, where you can search for online community calendars or resources. Check local newspapers for health fairs in the area. If you find out about an event too late to participate, ask to be on the list for next year's event. Most health fairs are held annually.

Preparation and planning (about three to four months prior)

Form a committee and choose a chairperson: Encourage participation within your intergroup at meetings or through the intergroup newsletter. Describe specific tasks and the time commitment needed to accomplish them.

Questions to ask the fair organizers: What are the days and times for setup, operation and breakdown? Are there any fees? What is your projected attendance? Who else will be exhibiting? Will other Twelve-Step programs be participating? Can we be situated near them? Will there be a speaker on compulsive overeating? Can we hold an open OA meeting at the site? Are there size limits or special requirements for our display? Will rental tables or chairs be available? Will an electrical outlet be accessible near our booth? Will copy machines or office supplies be available?

Materials (about two to three months prior)

Prepare the display: Your intergroup or region might own a professional exhibit booth. If not, use

a simple table and chairs, the Public Information Poster Kit, and an attractive display of OA literature (see below). All signs should be professional looking. The Overeaters Anonymous name and logo should be prominent. Avoid a cluttered look.

Stocking the booth: Supplies may include an extension cord, tape, magic markers, scissors, glue, rubber bands, a stapler and staples, paper clips, volunteer badges, white-out, pens, pencils, a camera and film to record the event, clipboards, and notepaper.

Literature: Only OA Conference- or board-approved literature should be offered. Bring enough so that people may take some, but don't overwhelm the display with it. The literature suggested below is high in newcomer interest and low in cost:

About OA

A Program of Recovery

Compulsive Eating: An Inside View

Fifteen questions

Many Symptoms, One Solution

New-Prospect Cards

To the Teen (flyer)

The Tools of Recovery

To the Family

To the Newcomer

OA Members Come in All Sizes

For health fairs held in work environments, at or near military bases or at health care facilities, we also suggest:

Treatment and Beyond

Introducing OA to Health Care Professionals

To attract people to meetings, bring a supply of local meeting lists without contact names. Be sure to include a handout that has the www.oa.org Web site address, as well as the address of your intergroup's Web site, if you have one. Back issues of *Lifeline* and the *Courier* may be available from the WSO, as well as subscription forms and literature catalogs. Bring along a sign-up sheet for

people who want to receive more information or your intergroup newsletter via email. For display only, you might also include the books *Overeaters Anonymous*, *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous* (also available as a CD), *For Today*, *Lifeline Sampler and Abstinence*; as well as specialized OA pamphlets such as *To the Man*.

Volunteers (about one to two months prior)

Get firm commitments from volunteers and make sure they know their areas of responsibility: setup, breakdown, general staffing, backup, etc. Arrange the schedule so that two volunteers will be working the booth at all times in case one has to leave temporarily. We suggest shifts no longer than three hours, with two hours being optimum. Make sure all volunteers are comfortable with being seen by the general public, who may ask them about their OA membership or may assume it. Call volunteers one month before the fair and again one week before the fair to confirm their participation. Give copies of these *Guidelines for Health Fair Participation* to all volunteers.

At the fair

Setting up: Do this as early as possible. It's easiest to have those who put the display and arrange the literature take the first shift.

Demeanor while working the table or booth: Be friendly, but don't push information or literature. Sit back from the table—this allows people to feel free to take material without feeling intimidated. Look alert and interested, letting people know you're ready to speak with them if they wish. Be careful about socializing with others staffing the booth; if you appear too "busy," attendees may be hesitant to approach. When speaking with them, make eye contact. Remember that this is a program of attraction, not promotion. There should be no eating, drinking or smoking at the booth. Dress neatly and appropriately.

Answering Questions: Telling people that OA is "a Twelve-Step program patterned after Alcoholics Anonymous" will answer a great many questions. Keep in mind that you're not expected to be an expert on compulsive overeating. You may, however, share your experience, strength and hope;

you might wish to bring your "before" pictures. If you give an opinion, make it clear that it is your opinion and not representative of OA as a whole.

Give people literature and meeting lists, and mention the Web site. Be sure to mention that if they have any questions, they are welcome to call the contact numbers on the meeting list or to visit the www.oa.org Web site.

Followup

Send thank-you notes to the fair organizers. Ask them to please put you on the mailing list for next year. Have a post-fair evaluation meeting with the volunteers to discuss how it went and collect suggestions for next time.

Just as you do for a public information event followup, try to determine how many health fair attendees went on to attend an OA meeting. Be sure to tell all your groups that you are trying to track the effectiveness of the health fair events. Please have them ask every newcomer, "How did you hear about OA?" This is the best kind of feedback because it is from your target audience and not an active member.

For more information about doing health fairs or other public information work, consult the *Public Information Service Manual* and the *Professional Outreach Manual*, both available through the WSO.

OA Board-Approved

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