



Hosting a Legislative

HEART
HEALTH DAY





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Acknowledgement

This guide was developed at the request of the Cardiovascular Health Branch of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to assist interested state Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention programs.

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HOSTING A LEGISLATIVE HEART HEALTH DAY

Purpose

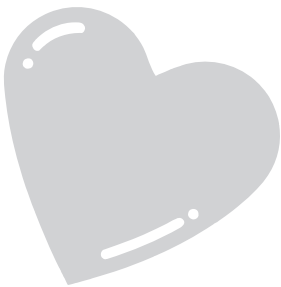
- To raise the awareness of state legislators, policy makers and staff about:
1. the number-one and number-three killers in the United States, heart disease and stroke, and
 2. community-based cardiovascular health promotion and disease prevention services that are available.

The overarching goal is to reach people who are in a position to influence policy change and assist in the development of resources. The event may feature meetings with legislators, a complimentary low-fat lunch, and a health fair. The health fair might include cardiovascular screenings, health counseling, and hands-on activities and exhibits that may be provided by various health care providers, local health departments and other partner organizations.

Logistics

STAFF AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

- Select a staff member or hire a temporary contractor to serve as lead coordinator for the Legislative Heart Health Day (LHHD) event.
- Establish a planning team of 10 to 12 members. Consider bringing together people with various skills, experiences, and connections. Of particular importance is including a member with experience in working with the media and a member(s) with connections to local hospitals and pharmaceutical companies.
- Schedule a minimum of three meetings (2 months prior to LHHD, 1 month prior to LHHD, 2 weeks prior to LHHD).
- Set agendas for planning meetings. (See next page for Sample Agendas.)
- Develop Task List including target date, responsible party and status report. (Appendix 1A provides a Sample Task List to be adapted for your particular state and event.)



Sample Agendas

Meeting 1 (3 months before LHH Day)	Meeting 2 (6 weeks before LHH Day)	Meeting 3 (2 weeks before LHH Day)
Welcome and introductions	Welcome	Welcome
Roles and responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall coordination • Budget and oversight • Clerical assistance • Contact Legislative Building to request/reserve space • Review task list (See Appendix 1A) 	Review of task list <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been done • What needs to be done • Budget concerns 	Review of task list <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on participating local health departments • Teleconference with partnering restaurant contact for catering lunches • Meet with Chief of Security, Legislative Services Building • Communications with entertainment providers
Develop agenda for LHH Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss current political climate and implications • Plan coordination efforts 	Review agenda	Finalize agenda and present layout of health fair
Participating providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts • Strategies to approach sponsors 	Update on participating sponsors and providers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contacts made • Further strategies • Invitations list 	Update on participating sponsors and providers Prepare directions for exhibitors and send out
Communications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of invitations, notices for legislators' desks, and posters • Preliminary discussion about publicity and press conference Legislative appointments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scheduling • Coaching tools (Talking Points) 	Publicity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan ribbon-cutting event, VIPs, speeches • Press conference • Press kits Update on legislative appointments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan contents of distribution packet 	Finalize publicity and media plans Update on legislative appointments and packets
Additional ideas/things to change from previous LHH Day	Giveaways <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggested items • Price quotes • Process for ordering 	Update on giveaways
Future planning team meetings	Scheduling of next planning meeting	

SPONSORS, EXHIBITORS AND PROVIDERS

- Recruit sponsors and negotiate the quid pro quo or what the sponsor is hoping to gain. For example, the sponsor may cover the expense of cholesterol screening or pay an exhibit fee in exchange for recognition and favorable exposure.
- Recruit health fair exhibitors and providers of screening activities. (See Appendix 2A)
- Plan for providing breakfast for volunteers and a heart-healthy lunch for participants. Recruit sponsors.
- Prepare a series of communications with exhibitors/providers.
- Distribute Registration Form that collects agency name, type of exhibit or screening, needs (exhibit space, table, electricity, etc.), and interest in meeting with a legislator and whether or not they need assistance scheduling this. (See Appendix 2B)
- Create a table that summarizes information gathered from registration forms including exhibitors/providers, contact, phone/fax, contribution, and needs for display. (See Appendix 1B)
 - Two weeks prior—send memo to exhibitors and providers with instructions, schedule, maps (of vicinity of Legislative Complex, State Legislative Building floorplan) and parking instructions. (See Appendix 2C)
 - Create blueprint of location of exhibits for use in directing exhibitors/screeners on day of event. (See Appendix 1C)

Space and Equipment

- Reserve space/rooms for event at the state legislative building. (See Appendix 2D)
- Rent tables, chairs, tablecloths, etc.

PROMOTIONS

- Design and print “Save the Date” postcards.
- Design and print invitations.
- Advertise and distribute invitations. (See Appendix 2E)
- Distribute Fact Sheet and Schedule of Events to legislators on the day before Heart Health Day. In most states, authorization is required prior to placing anything on a legislator’s desk. (See Appendices 2F and 2G. Note that the names of the Senator and Representative who gave approval for distribution is listed on the document.)
- Prepare Press Kit for reporters who come to the LHHD event. Contents of a press kit may include: Schedule of Events, Fact Sheet(s), and recent compelling documents. In North Carolina, the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force’s Newsletters were included as well as the North Carolina Prevention Report Card from the N.C. Prevention Partners and the most recent *North Carolina Medical Journal* that featured the epidemic of childhood overweight and obesity. (See Appendix 3)
- Plan for media and television reporters who are looking for photo opportunities.

- Distribute Press Release on day of event.
- Encourage exhibitors to provide intriguing giveaways as this promotes participation. Consider asking exhibitors ahead of time what they plan to bring as this information may be useful in planning placement of exhibits. It works well to spread the “freebies” out to entice participants. This information can also be useful to the event coordinator to prevent redundancy of efforts.

MEETINGS WITH LEGISLATORS

- Plan for Legislative appointments
 - Provide phone numbers and locations of legislators to participants who agree to schedule an appointment with their legislator.
 - Decide who will support participants who request assistance in scheduling legislative appointments (as gathered on registration form).
 - Develop a list of talking points to assist participants in their discussion with their legislator. The participant may want to tailor these talking points to reflect their particular county or region. (See Appendix 4A)
 - Create a packet that participants can leave with their legislator. (See Appendix 4B)
 - Distribute Legislative Visit Action Report (See Appendix 4C) so that participants can report back on what the legislator was interested in.

DOCUMENT EVENT FOR FUTURE ENDEAVORS

- Create notebook of planning tools, event notes and follow-up for the next LHHD.

Thank You's

- Create eye-catching posters that list and thank sponsors to be displayed prominently at event.
- Create a list of those who should receive a thank-you note—planning team, local health department representatives, other participants, providers, sponsors, volunteers, government officials, task force members, SUBWAY, and legislative building staff. (See Appendix 2H)
- Customize thank-you note for each group. (See Appendix 2H)

NORTH CAROLINA STORY

In 1995 the North Carolina Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force was established by the General Assembly. This Task Force had four subcommittees, one of which was the Public Awareness Subcommittee.

The Public Awareness Subcommittee was charged with raising awareness about the burden and preventability of heart disease and stroke in the state. Initial meetings focused on how to achieve this very broad charge and how to achieve anything without resources. The committee decided that its initial target audience needed to be legislators and decision makers in order to

acquire the resources necessary to address a wider audience. Based in part on a public health article on a South Carolina experience,¹ the idea for a Legislative Heart Health Day was birthed.

North Carolina's first Legislative Heart Health Day occurred in 1997 and was a major event of the Public Awareness Subcommittee. Participants made scheduled calls on their legislators to advocate for attention and/or funding for heart disease and stroke at the local and state level. The event was deemed one of the biggest and best of its kind to take place at the General Assembly, and it succeeded in helping to pass a budget that included \$170,500 in recurring funds for the Task Force's public awareness campaign.

The North Carolina Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force has hosted three additional Legislative Heart Health Days since the initial event in 1997. The event has been held every other year on a date near Valentine's Day with the theme of "Save Your Sweet Heart." Over time, Legislative Heart Health Day events have evolved to reflect lessons learned from past experience and to be attuned to the existing political climate.

Lessons Learned

Each year a temporary employee has been hired to serve as coordinator under the direction of the Executive Director of the Task Force, who also serves as Head of the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Branch. A planning team has been recruited to attend to logistics but, more importantly, to make decisions regarding setting the tone of the event and building and learning from previous years' work.

IN THE BEGINNING

When a state has no existing resources, as was the case for North Carolina in 1997, fund raising is essential in order to host a LHHD. North Carolina's first LHHD required considerable effort recruiting sponsors and selling them on the idea. With no existing resources, the planning committee decided to charge an exhibit fee of \$2,000 to those in the private sector who were interested in supporting the event as sponsors and/or exhibitors. A fee was not required of local health departments or not-for-profit organizations. Other partners provided in-kind contributions such as printing and giveaways. Due to budget limitations, the first LHHD did not offer cholesterol nor diabetes screenings.

In subsequent years, no sponsorship fee was required as the Task Force had achieved recurring funding for the public awareness campaign. Recruiting was minimized, as the planning committee received calls from various providers and partners asking to participate. In fact, the second LHHD, in 1999, featured cholesterol and diabetes screening donated by a pharmaceutical company that volunteered its services. Each LHHD year has been somewhat different but each



had approximately 40 exhibitors. Some years, interested exhibitors have been turned away because the exhibit quota was full.

Meetings with legislators are an important aspect of LHHH. Participation is open to anybody who is attending the LHHH. Legislators are most interested in hearing from their own constituents. It is important to get local health department representatives involved, as they can discuss the needs and opportunities in their county or district. The North Carolina Cardiovascular Health Program mandated participation of the coordinators of the six funded counties for the 1999 LHHH.

While LHHH is a one-day event, there are opportunities to strive for lasting environmental change within the Legislative Building and potentially in the state. In addition to providing low-fat lunches from Subway, the Legislative Cafeteria Manager was approached to highlight and label healthy options being offered on LHHH. This effort was well received, and the Legislative Cafeteria is now an ongoing participant in the Winner's Circle Healthy Dining Program.²

Subway brought in spokesman Jared Fogle in 2001 and 2003. In 2001 a legislator approached the Executive Director of the Task Force to learn how to get a Subway in his district. In 2003, Jared presented a \$20,000 gift on behalf of the Subway franchisees to the American Heart Association (AHA) to be used for joint activities between the N.C. Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force and the AHA.

In North Carolina, smoking is still allowed in the Legislative Building. The committee asked to have ashtrays removed from the common areas of the Legislative Building for the duration of the LHHH event. In 2003, one state representative (a former smoker) participated in the screening activities and was so inspired that she put forward a motion to ban smoking on the floor of the House of Representatives—and it passed!

SETTING THE TONE

The planning committee for the first LHHH in 1997 decided the event should be upbeat and have a Valentine's Day theme. Key messages were that healthy food can taste good and exercise can be fun, as opposed to heavier education aspects. Entertainment included a children's jump-rope team from a local elementary school and a "Rappin' Granny" on roller blades.

The first three LHHHs featured entertainment that was well received and enjoyed. In preparing for the fourth LHHH in 2003, the state was facing significant budget cuts and the Task Force Executive Director proposed to the Legislation and Resource Development subcommittee of the Task Force not

LEGISLATORS ARE MOST INTERESTED IN HEARING FROM THEIR OWN CONSTITUENTS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES INVOLVED, AS THEY CAN DISCUSS THE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THEIR COUNTY OR DISTRICT.

doing the LHHD event out of concern for potential criticism in a year of great financial scrutiny. The Public Awareness subcommittee disagreed with not hosting the event and cited that it had become a tradition and also had been previously successful in securing resources. The planning committee decided to go ahead with the LHHD in 2003 but to set a somewhat different tone in this year of budget crisis. Instead of entertainment and festivity, the event focused more on the extent of the problem of heart disease and stroke and preventability.

The 2003 Schedule of Events included an Opening Celebration, Ribbon Cutting and comments by the Lieutenant Governor, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, State Health Director, Chair and Vice-Chair of the Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Task Force, well-known university leaders, Jared Fogle of SUBWAY® Restaurants fame, and a high-ranking representative from the Mid-Atlantic Affiliate of the American Heart Association.

2003 Screening Activities included:

“Ask the Doctor”—provided by the N.C. Academy of Family Physicians

“The Dietitian is In”—provided by the N.C. Dietetic Association

Ankle/Brachial Blood Pressure Check for the screening of peripheral arterial disease—provided by Wake Forest University Baptist Medical Center and the Consortium of Southeastern Hypertension Control (COSEHC)

Cholesterol and Diabetes Screening—provided by Bristol-Myers Squibb

Stroke Risk Assessment—provided by Boehringer Ingelheim

Cardiac Risk Factors Screening (including BMI)—provided by the University of North Carolina (UNC) Heart Center

Stroke Screening—provided by UNC Stroke Center

2003 Exhibits (information distribution) included:

American Heart Association/American Stroke Association
Stroke Awareness by Duke University Hospital’s Neuroscience Center

Eat Smart, Move More...North Carolina

Lowes Foods (grocery store chain that brands all heart-healthy items in the store with the Start With Your Heart logo)

Medical Review of North Carolina

N.C. Cardiovascular Health Program exhibit on Active Community Environments

N.C. Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (NCAAHPERD)

N.C. Cooperative Extension Service—Color Me Healthy

N.C. Department of Agriculture

Diabetes Prevention and Control Branch

N.C. Healthy Weight Initiative

N.C. Nutrition Network

UNC Heart Center, UNC Stroke Center

Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch

UNC Department of Family Medicine

Tri-State Stroke Network

N.C. WiseWoman Project

N.C. Prevention Partners

Several local health departments

SCREENING DATA

In 1999 and 2001, screening data were separated out and aggregated for legislators, legislative staff and visitors. (See Appendix 5) These data were then used for communicating to legislators about their own prevalence and risks.

Parting Thoughts

There are many ways to make a Legislative Heart Health Day attractive. Giveaways and gifts are very popular, but it is better to strategically place these gifts around the exhibit hall rather than distributing pre-prepared “goodie bags” which make it too easy to gather the freebies without participating in the educational aspects of the LHHD event. Similarly instead of providing a box lunch, it may be wise to have stations throughout the fair where participants pick up various lunch components—sandwich, drink, side, etc.—to promote activity rather than merely picking up lunch and leaving.

Ideas may occur that are state-specific or especially appropriate for a given year. Creativity, political sensitivity and building on your own and others’ past efforts will make your LHHD a success.

VARIOUS CREATIVE GIFTS AND TOUCHES HAVE INCLUDED:

- ♥ Heart-shaped pens and lollipops
- ♥ Heart-shaped, brain-shaped and ambulance-shaped stress balls.
- ♥ A South African “Love letter”—a beaded lapel pin with the outline of a heart
- ♥ A basket of N.C. produce on each legislative desk from the Department of Agriculture’s “Goodness Grows in North Carolina” campaign
- ♥ Volunteers delivering invitations and fact sheets to legislative offices the day before the event
- ♥ Providing heart-shaped stickers that read “Legislator.” Theoretically, this sticker allowed the busy legislators to move to the front of the long screening lines for cholesterol and blood pressure. Most legislators did not use this privilege, but did like the acknowledgement.

REFERENCES

1. Temple, S.P., Clark, S.F., Wheeler, F.C., and Cooley, M.B.: Legislative Cardiovascular Health Check: A Multidisciplinary Health Promotion Experience for South Carolina Lawmakers. Public Health Reports vol.109, No.3 368-371 (May-June 1994).
2. Winner’s Circle is a program that seeks to create healthy eating environments in North Carolina by giving restaurants and schools assistance in identifying and promoting healthy menu choices. www.ncwinnerscircle.org.

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