

Event Planning for Senior Audiences

What Do I Need To Consider When Planning an Event or Activities for Seniors?

One fun way to introduce the senior community to SNAP, regardless of age, is through a planned event or activity. Health fairs, grocery stores, and senior centers may be good locations for events. Don't forget to include the caregiver audience and those who influence seniors in your promotional efforts.

Here are a few things to consider as you plan your event:

- **What type of event are you considering?** Health fair, grocery store with nutrition education providers and prescreening services, senior center, other?
- **Define audience when appropriate**, as not all events are for all seniors.
- **What is your budget?**
- **What type of equipment**, materials (grocery bags/cart filled with food), banners, etc. will you need?
- **What will your publicity be?** How will your event be announced? What media sources will you use? When will promotion begin? Will you use the Internet?
- **Whom can your organization partner with** to share costs and materials, or to provide volunteers, etc.?
- **Make sure everyone has a clear understanding of their roles** and responsibilities. Identify an event leader.
- **Make a contact list** for those who will be working on the event.
- **What time of day will you hold the event?** Rush-hour traffic, trouble seeing at night, and safety concerns may keep many seniors off the road after dusk. On the other hand, those who rely on caregivers or friends for transportation may be able to attend only after the normal workday ends or on weekends.
- **Keep the season and weather in mind** when choosing when to hold the event, and whether it will be held indoors or outside.
- **Food?** Keep in mind that many seniors have medical conditions that limit certain foods, including those high in sugar and sodium. In addition, if your budget is tight, a local restaurant or nonprofit, such as the local Diabetes or Heart Association, university, or SNAP nutrition education provider may be willing to fund the food as part of a healthy cooking demonstration.
- **Evaluation of event?** Are there any reports to complete? Make sure someone is keeping track of attendance, applications requested or completed, and other important information. Consider developing a brief survey (no more than 10 questions) to find out what people thought of the event and ways to improve it. It's the best way to know for sure if your event was a success! You can also use this sample evaluation form.

SNAP Offices and the Media

Be sure to advise your local SNAP office if you plan to host an event or conduct any media outreach. It is important that they be prepared for an increase in calls or visits. In addition, it is helpful if you provide them with a list of messages or media materials you plan to use. That way, local offices can better serve callers and/or visitors.

If possible, partner with the local SNAP office. Local offices may have materials that you can give out and may be willing to send local spokespeople or workers to the event.

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Choosing a Location

Since it is likely that some in your audience will need assistance, you will want to consider:

- **Wheelchair accessibility.** Does your event site have ramps, elevators, and other accommodations?
- **Restrooms.** Are they nearby and available to people with problems moving around?
- **What transportation services** will be available, if any?
- **Make sure hallways are well-lit** and can accommodate wheelchairs and walkers, and that floors are free of trash or loose rugs and mats.
- **If a mobile van for health screenings, nutrition education, or SNAP prescreenings** will be there, where will it be parked, and how will waiting lines be handled?

Setting Up an Event (day of or several days before event):

- **Check in with partners.**
- **Distribute contact list.**
- **Materials:** Do you have all the materials you need, such as name tags, forms, or pencils and pens? Practical “give-away” promotional items are often popular with seniors. Items might include grocery pad magnets, key chains with mini-flashlights, and refrigerator photo frames.
- **Booth location:** Schedule a walkthrough of the location to double check details, such as placement of electrical outlets, if needed.
- **Evaluation tool:** If you have a survey to distribute, make sure you have enough copies.

Day of Event:

- Arrive early to check out booth, or to hold a quick pre-event meeting.
- Use plenty of signage and have extra volunteers on hand to help with directions and answer questions.
- People working on the event should understand roles and responsibilities, and should have a point of contact in case more help is needed or to resolve issues.
- Check equipment to make sure it is working.
- Expect surprises! No matter how well you plan, unexpected things happen.
- Consider standing a short distance away from your table to allow hesitant people to browse your information without feeling pressured. Approach them when they appear to be looking around for someone and thank them for stopping by when they move on.



Tips & Tools

For more information about how to plan a successful event, please see the Events chapter.