

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Special Events and Fundraising

Non-profit organizations, including many hospices, faith based organizations and other community-based programs, often plan and present special events as fundraising activities. In addition to raising funds, these events are often used to raise awareness of the organization's mission. A well-managed event can generate both positive publicity and needed funds. It is advisable to proactively address the risk exposures inherent in such events before getting too far into the planning process.

Fundraising events are outside the normal operations for most organizations. As with any activity outside the norm, consider the risks and benefits, such as:

- Will the event increase awareness of the organization and its mission?
- Is the event mission appropriate? If something would go wrong at the event, would the media and community response be, "What were they thinking?"
- Are there unacceptable risks associated with the type of event or venue? Events involving carnivals, motor vehicles, pyrotechnics and/or events that are on or around water may be considered more risky than a fashion show or golf outing.
- Does the organization have the resources and skills needed to manage the event? Will activities be handled in house by employees or volunteers or will some of the functions be contracted out? If services are contracted out, it is important to have a written agreement outlining the responsibility of all parties involved.

Once the type of event and venue have been chosen, it is advisable to identify an event manager and team to coordinate the event. The event manager would have overall responsibility for the event. Areas where a team member may need to be assigned responsibility include: media liaison, food/beverage coordinator, communication with third parties and participants/attendees, registrations and management of donations.

Will alcohol be served?

While serving alcohol at a fundraising event is not an unusual occurrence, it does bring an additional risk exposure. These days more and more, event hosts are being held accountable for the actions of their guests when they leave an event.

Even when alcohol is served, focus the event on networking and socializing rather than drinking. When serving alcohol, it is recommended that food is served as well.

Offer non-alcoholic alternatives and verify that staff, volunteers and bartenders are well versed in recognizing the signs of intoxication and how to handle them. It is recommended that only trained, professional bartenders be utilized when alcohol is being served. Anticipate the end of the event and stop serving alcohol at least an hour before.

Risk management checklist

Give consideration to assigning a risk/safety coordinator for each event. The organization's safety director could serve in this role or in an advisory capacity.

Risk management and overall safety goals may include:

This is a sample guideline furnished to you by Glatfelter Healthcare Practice. Your organization should review it and make the necessary modifications to meet your organization's needs. The intent of this guideline is to assist you in reducing exposure to the risk of injury, harm, or damage to personnel, property, and the general public. For additional information on this topic, contact your Glatfelter Healthcare Practice Representative at (800) 233-1957.

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- Complete a proactive health and safety risk assessment – Review activities from past similar events. Evaluate any incidents or near misses that may have occurred. Injuries to volunteers seem to be the most frequently reported incidents. How can similar incidents or injuries be avoided for this event?
- Off-site events – Operate legally and in compliance with any contracts or agreements with third parties such as facility owners and/or service providers. Obtain permits from the county or township if needed. Review the environment and consider the level of risk to participants and/or environment.
- Adequate Insurance Coverage – Contact the insurance agent to inform them of the event and verify coverage. Advise if alcohol will be served at the event.
- Injury prevention – This includes injury to employees, volunteers, spectators, participants and others. If there is a reasonable possibility that injuries might occur (i.e. events involving sporting activities such as 5K runs, ball games, horseback rides, etc.) confirm that there are procedures in place for an immediate and appropriate response to any injuries that might occur. Train event team members in the steps to take if a participant requires first aid or a medical emergency arises.
- Post-event analysis – Once the special event/fundraiser has concluded, bring the team back together to analyze the successes and any possible failures or shortcomings of the event. Review any incident reports that were generated. Get as much feedback as possible from participants and team members and use that information to set the stage for planning the next event.

Managing special event risks requires a proactive team approach. The time spent in the planning process, addressing all potential risk exposures prior to the actual event, will contribute to the event's overall success and to your reputation in the community.

Resources:

Nonprofit Risk Management Center (www.nonprofitrisk.org)