

OA GUIDELINES



Guidelines for Health Fair Participation

Purpose of participating

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

Funding

In addition to funding through your service body, funding may be available through your region, or in cooperation with other local service bodies. The Reduced Cost Literature program can assist groups and service bodies purchasing bulk literature for public information and outreach projects. For an application, go to oa.org/document-library and search under the “Public Information” category.

How to locate health fairs in your area

Your group’s or service body’s Public Information Committee may already have a list of contacts, which can be a great starting point in finding local health fairs. Other great resources are the internet, newspapers, and local community news, television, or radio programs. Search for online community calendars or health-related resources. If you find out about an event too late to participate, ask to be added to the notification list for next year’s event.

Preparation and planning

(about three to four months prior)

Form a committee and choose a chair: Encourage participation within your service body at meetings or through the service body’s newsletter. Describe specific tasks and the time commitment needed to accomplish them.

Questions to ask the fair organizers:

- What are the days and times of setup, operation, and breakdown?
- Are there any fees? Ask about not-for-profit rates. If participation is cost-prohibitive, ask the organizers if your group or service body can place OA information, such as business cards

or flyers with contact information and meeting times, on a table at the event.

- What is the event’s projected attendance?
- Who else will be exhibiting?
- Will other Twelve Step programs be participating?
- Can your group or service body be located near them? Will there be a speaker on compulsive eating?
- Can you hold an open OA meeting at the site?
- Are there size limits or special requirements for the display?
- Will rental tables or chairs be available?
- Will an electrical outlet, if needed, be accessible near the booth?
- Will a copy machine be available if needed?

Materials (about two to three months prior)

Prepare the display: Your service body might own a professional exhibit booth. If not, use a table and chairs. Create a display using the Public Information Posters (available for free download at oa.org/document-library; “PI Posters”) and a selection of OA-approved literature (see below). Consider a professionally made banner, which can be used again. To use the Overeaters Anonymous logo, request permission from the World Service Office using the OA Logo Permission Request form found on oa.org. (Go to oa.org/document-library; “Copyright.”) One way to appear professional is to avoid a cluttered look.

Stocking the booth: To prepare, use this list of supplies you may need.

- extension cord
- tape
- markers
- scissors
- glue
- rubber bands
- stapler and staples

- paper clips
- volunteer badges
- correction fluid/tape
- pens and/or pencils
- camera or mobile device to take photos of your booth and/or the event for your website or newsletter. (Remember not to photograph faces or distinguishing features in order to protect members' and visitors' anonymity.)
- clipboards and notepaper

Literature: Only OA Conference- or board-approved literature should be offered. (See the *OA-Approved Literature List* at <https://oa.org/guidelines-meetings/approved-literature-list>.) Bring enough so that people may take some. To avoid clutter, store extra literature under the table. The literature suggested below is high in newcomer interest and low in cost. It's available from the OA bookstore at bookstore.oa.org.

- *In OA, Recovery Is Possible* (#135)
- *Fifteen Questions* (#755)
- *Many Symptoms, One Solution* (#106)
- *New Prospect Card* (#450)
- *The Tools of Recovery* (#160)
- *To the Teen* questionnaire (#756)
- *Is Food a Problem for You?* (#750)
- *OA Members Come in All Sizes* (#110)
- *To the Family of the Compulsive Eater* (#240)
- *Where Do I Start?* (#705)
- *About OA* (#751)

For health fairs held in work environments, at/or near military bases, or at health care facilities, these pamphlets, also available from the OA bookstore, are also suggested.

- *When Should I Refer Someone to Overeaters Anonymous?* (#770)
- *Courier*, a newsletter for the professional community (To download, go to oa.org/document-library; "Public Information.")

Bring a supply of local meeting lists. (Obtain permission from meeting contacts to include their information.) Include a handout that has the oa.org

website and your service body's website and/or contact information. Back issues of *Lifeline* magazine are available from the OA bookstore at bookstore.oa.org. Bring along a sign-up sheet for people who want to receive more information or your service body's newsletter via email. For display only, consider including *Overeaters Anonymous, Third Edition*, book and CDs; *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Overeaters Anonymous, Second Edition* book; *For Today; Taste of Lifeline; Abstinence, Second Edition; Voices of Recovery*; and specialized OA pamphlets, such as *To the Man Who Wants to Stop Compulsive Overeating, Welcome*.

Volunteers (about one to two months prior)

Get firm commitments from volunteers: Booth volunteers should be chosen carefully. They will be representing the OA program and should demonstrate recovery on all three levels: emotional, spiritual, and physical. You may wish to have abstinence requirements. It is highly recommended that booth volunteers have at least one year of current abstinence and are maintaining a healthy body weight. Look for members who have suffered from different symptoms of the disease.

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

Day of fair

Setting up: Do this as early as possible. It's easiest to have those who put up the display and lay out the literature to 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 (Tradition Eleven). There should be no eating, drinking, or smoking at the booth. Dress neatly and appropriately. Record the number of visitors to your table.

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. Be sure to mention that if they have any questions, they are welcome to call the contact numbers on the meeting list or visit oa.org.

Follow-up

Send thank-you notes to the fair organizers. Ask them to put your group or service body 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.

For more information about doing health fairs or other public information work, consult the *Public Information Service Manual* (#762), available from the OA bookstore at bookstore.oa.org.

OA Board-approved

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