

POAC

AUTISM SERVICES
www.POAC.net

Participant Guide to a Successful Walk-a-thon

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Walk For A Difference



Help Save the Life of a Child with Autism

Thank you for your commitment to those with autism, their families, and their teachers, and welcome to our premiere fundraising event of the year! Not only does POAC train thousands of NJ police officers and first responders every year on how to keep our children with autism safe, but POAC is also the largest provider of FREE autism recreation, training, and education in the entire state. The needs of children with autism and their families are growing. POAC's goal is to continue to meet these needs in real ways every day. Hope for a brighter future is also growing because of your participation in this walk.

This handbook is designed to give you all the information you will need to make your walk-a-thon experience as successful as possible. The handbook and the walk web site, www.poacwalk.org, will provide all kinds of tips, tools, and templates to make your job easy and fun. There are so many ways to make the most of your efforts. Of course, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to call the POAC office at 732-785-1099 or email us at info@poac.net.

Your Participant Guide Includes the Following:

- ✓ **Team Leader Responsibilities**
 - A description of the team leader duties
- ✓ **Tips for Team Leaders**
 - Helpful hints for team leaders in recruiting walkers
- ✓ **Team Building Tips**
 - Helpful hints for team leaders to raise more funds
- ✓ **Ten Tips For Successful Letter Writing**
 - Tips to get the most from your letter writing and social media posts
- ✓ **Sample Letters**
 - Examples of letters and emails used to fundraise
- ✓ **Using Our Walk Site**
 - Quick and easy steps to online fundraising
- ✓ **Add-On Fundraisers**
 - How to maximize your fundraising efforts with some fun and easy ideas





Step 1

Get Started

Go to www.poacwalk.org to register your team. When you get to the landing page, click on the walk location of your choice. Then, simply click on the “Register” button and fill in your information. At that point, you can choose to get involved by joining or starting a team.

Step 2

Tell Your Story – Customize Your Web Site

Once you have registered, you will be directed to your Event Headquarters. You will be given a lot of options for personalizing your event and how your team page and personal pages will look. The site will easily walk you through, step by step, on how to customize your page, import your email contacts, connect to social media and more. You can use an email template or create your own. Either way a link back to your web page will be included automatically. This makes it easy for your friends, family, and coworkers to make donations right online. No personal information is shared. Your donors can choose to remain anonymous or they can post a message of support to appear on your site.

Step 3

Track Your Progress

Your Event Headquarters gives you the opportunity to check on how your campaign is going and how close you are to your goal.

You can change or edit your site any time you like, track your donations, send emails, track your members, and communicate with them. Now you’re ready to start recruiting team members!

If you have questions, POAC is here to help! Call the office at 732-785-1099 or email us at info@poac.net.





Recruit ten walkers to raise \$100 each – That’s \$1000 for your team!! All team leaders should try to find at least ten people to walk on walk day. Friends, co-workers, vendors, family, and neighbors are all great people to ask to walk or sponsor you. Whether you have ten walkers or two, encourage your team to raise at least \$1000. Here are some helpful tips:

1. Recruit walkers face to face.
2. Recruit a co-leader to help you build your team.
3. Distribute flyers/brochures to walkers. Encourage them to pre-register as soon as possible.
4. Consistently communicate with your walkers to help them maximize their efforts. Social media is a great way to do this.
5. Teach your team to fundraise. Keep your walkers motivated by giving them hints on effective ways to raise money. Send them articles with different ideas.
6. Remind your walkers to bring their sponsor money with them on walk day (or drop off to you beforehand).
7. Have your committee contact or chairperson speak to your team to inspire more fundraising.
8. Have special tee shirts or hats made to show your team spirit. Come up with a name for your group of walkers. It can be part of your name (Pieces of the Puzzle, Steps for Stephen, etc.) or part of your company’s name (Team ABC Company, Dr. Smith’s Steppers, etc.). Be sure to write your team name on the flyers/brochures you pass out so participants know to call you with questions.
9. Get a local business to donate a gift certificate to the top fundraiser of your team as an incentive to promote competition within your team.
10. Sincerely thank your team on behalf of the 3.5 million people who have autism and their families who love them.

Publicize the event! Let everyone know that participation is the key. Here are some ways to do that:

1. Promote the event with posters, memos, newsletters and social media. Put up flyers/brochures at your workplace, gym, church, or school.
2. Organize an office meeting (or take time out of one that is already planned) to get everyone excited about your walk team.
3. Ask your company for incentive tee shirts, prizes, and matching funds (this will double your team’s contribution).

Congratulate yourself! Bring your team to the starting line and enjoy Walking for a Difference. Take pride in knowing you did your best for those who need it the most.

POAC can help by providing you with sign-up posters and walk advertisement posters. Also, share with your team the “Add-On Fundraising” ideas on the last page of this guide.



Walk For A Difference

Tips for Team Leaders

How do I...

Post to social media?	When you are in your HQ, there are several options for reaching friends and family on the left side of the screen. Click on <i>Promote Via Social Media</i> and choose from the options.
Add walkers or team members who want to raise funds offline?	Go to your HQ and click on the second task on the list. It's called, <i>Create or Join a Team</i> . From there you can email anyone you wish to invite to join your team. Walkers can also register the day of the walk using a paper registration form which is available on the walk web site under Event Information. Print it out and bring it with you. We will also have them available the day of the event.
Recruit friends who want to raise money, but can't come to the walk?	Invite them to join your team as in the example above. Have them list themselves as virtual walkers and they can use the same fundraising strategies as any other walker.
Handle offline donations such as cash or checks?	Mail or drop them off to the POAC office before the walk. If you choose to do this, we will post the donations as soon as we receive them. You can also log onto your HQ and enter them as pending donations. Once we receive them, we will verify them and they will show on your walk page exactly as you entered them. Please be sure to convert any cash donations to a check before sending. Or you can bring all the donations with you on walk day. They won't appear on your team or personal page until the week following the walk, but we will add everything up when you register so you can claim your tee shirt and any prize you have earned.
Add walkers to my team who do not wish to raise funds online, such as children?	Go to your HQ. There is a list of tasks on the right side of the page. Click on the first one labeled, <i>Join Walk For a Difference</i> . You will have the ability to list these walkers there. You can use this link even if it's crossed out.
<p>Remember, the more people we have registered, the more successful the walk will be.</p> <p>Also, please be sure to let us know about any fundraisers you are doing to support the walk and your team. We want to help you get the word out.</p>	

Here are some facts that may help your campaign:

- ✓ In New Jersey 1 in every 41 children is diagnosed with autism.
- ✓ More children will be diagnosed with autism this year than with AIDS, diabetes & cancer combined.
- ✓ POAC is the largest provider of FREE autism training and education in the state.
- ✓ POAC funded the first NJ program for the early detection of and intervention for children with autism.
- ✓ POAC trains thousands of police and first responders every year on how to keep our children with autism safe.
- ✓ POAC provides free family recreational activities all year long including: surfing, horseback riding, movies, indoor gym days, bowling and pizza parties, and Annual FREE Family Carnivals located throughout NJ.
- ✓ The services POAC provides, including training, recreation, and support are FREE!!
- ✓ POAC promotes and supports autism research to improve the lives of individuals with autism.





Walk For A Difference

Teambuilding and Fundraising Tips

1. Set walker and fundraising goals and develop a plan to recruit walkers. Think about people who might participate in the walk if you asked them. Target people like:
 - Family members and friends
 - Classmates, teachers, and fellow parents
 - Your and your spouse's co-workers
2. Talk the walk. Talk and/or write to these people about the walk and why you think it is important to support POAC's efforts to fund autism services such as education, recreation, and safety. Don't just ask people to join your team; make sure they know why you want them to join you and what you want them to do.
3. Make sure that you know who is on your team. Encourage all your team members to register online. If your team members don't have internet access, you can register for them, or have them complete and send in the registration form located on the walk website.
4. Hold your own Walk Kickoff event for family, friends, and co-workers. Pass out walk information and flyers and sign up people for your team right on the spot. Remember flyers and other information are available right on the walk website.
5. Stress the importance of fundraising to your team walkers throughout the entire pre-walk period. Remember the purpose of this walk is very simple: To raise as much money as possible so that POAC can fund, promote, and support autism education for families, teachers, paraprofessionals and emergency service personnel, and also provide free recreational events for children with autism and their entire families.
6. Get vendor sponsors/donations whenever possible. Think about vendors frequently used by you or your company. Send them a letter on company letterhead asking for a donation to your walk team.
7. Consider doing an Add-On fundraiser. These are smaller events that you hold to support your walk efforts. All of the following are great Add-Ons and there is more information on the last page:
 - Dress Down Days – Hold a dress down day at work or school. Remember to get permission.
 - Have a Heart for Autism – You can sell paper hearts at your school, office, or place of business. The hearts are then signed by the purchaser and displayed on the wall of fame.
 - Have a Yard Sale, Bake Sale, or Car Wash – They are all great ways to get donations.
 - Try Canning Outside a Local Grocery Store – Be sure to get permission.
 - Matching Gifts – Ask your employer if they offer matching funds. It's a great way to double your efforts.

You can get all the information you need on Dress Downs and Have a Heart for Autism at www.poac.net in the "Ways to Help" section and click on "Get Your School Involved" or "Get Your Workplace Involved."



Walk For A Difference

Effective Letter Writing

The most effective way to raise funds for POAC is through letter writing.

Here Are Ten Steps to Successful Letter Writing:

1. Write the letter. Say what you are doing and why you are doing it. Include a photo when appropriate.
2. Mail to family members, friends, co-workers and business associates 3-4 weeks before the walk event. (Try using your holiday card mailing list).
3. Enclose a copy of your walker pledge sheet with your personal pledge on it so everyone knows that you are personally contributing to the cause you are asking them to support.
4. State your personal fundraising goal in your letter. The higher the better.
5. Include some information about the important work being done by POAC in the letter.
6. Be sure to say that donations are tax-deductible and that checks should be made payable to POAC.
7. State that you would like the donation by the date of the walk so you can turn it in at the event. Enclose a return envelope if possible. (Donations should be returned directly to you so you can thank everyone personally after the walk).
8. Remember to include on your mailing list any vendors, consultants and business people with whom you do business. These people tend to make much larger donations since they usually make them from a business rather than a personal checking account.
9. Be sure to send thank you notes after the walk to everyone who sponsors you.
10. Remember the more letters you send, the more money you will raise to enable POAC to help even more children affected by autism.



Remember to use Facebook, Twitter, and any other social networking sites you may be involved with. They are a great way to reach not only your friends and family, but their friends, and their friends, and so on...





These and other sample letters are available for you to use in your HQ section on the walk website, www.poacwalk.org.

Sample Letter or Email:

Dear (insert name):

I am participating in Autism Walk For A Difference, an amazing event, and I am asking for your support.

This cause is so important to me. I am raising money for POAC Autism Services. POAC is an amazing non-profit organization providing hundreds of FREE events for families every year. Their services impact the 1 in every 41 children in our state with autism. They are literally saving lives.

Please donate to my team here: (include a link to your team page) and help make a difference today for these amazing children. Please share my page with your social network. If you want to get involved, visit POAC's website, www.poac.net or their walk-a-thon page, www.poacwalk.org.

Thank you for your support!

With heartfelt thanks,

Sample Friends and Family Team Letter:

Dear Friends and Family:

On (insert walk date) I am participating in POAC Autism Services "Walk for a Difference" walk-a-thon. I am inviting you to join my team and help me raise funds to meet my goal. You can join right online and help spread the word using social media.

Did you know that every 11 minutes another child is diagnosed with autism? This occurred in my own family when my child was diagnosed. POAC is an organization that I am passionately involved with. They have changed my child's life in so many ways and have provided so much hope for the future. From fun recreational events to life saving trainings and seminars, they are helping thousands of other New Jersey children too. The vast majority of these events and services are free to everyone who works with or loves a child with autism.

Please follow this link to join me in helping this great organization. (insert link to your page) Let's make (insert your team name) the biggest and best team this year! Money raised will help POAC continue to Make Lives Better Every Day for the 1 in 41 NJ children living with autism. No donation is too small and any support is greatly appreciated. Join my team and walk with me or share my page and spread the word to help me reach my fundraising goal.

Sincerely,



Walk For A Difference

Try Doing an Add-On Fundraiser to Support Your Team

An Add-On Fundraiser is one that is run before the walk, at work, at school, or in the community, which goes toward your team goal. Many walkers and team captains find this to be a great way to meet their goals and have a lot of fun doing it. Here are some ideas:

Activity	Description
Have a Heart for Autism (All information on running this event is available on www.poac.net under Ways to Help.)	Sell paper hearts for \$1 and have students, members, or customers sign their name and display in a prominent area. For schools, consider having different grades compete against each other to see who gets the most.
Fun Runs	Walk-a-thon, Bike-a-thon, Bowl-a-thon, Jump-a-thon, Skate-a-thon or Dance-a-thon. Take pledges and do your thing for hours. Remember to sell refreshments to raise even more money.
Car Wash	Local banks and restaurants will often donate their parking lot and water for your event.
Dress Down, Hats on Day, Pajama Day (All information on running this event is available on www.poac.net under Ways to Help.)	Teachers, staff and students get to dress down, wear hats, or wear pajamas for donations of \$2 - \$5. POAC has stickers and posters online to help with your event.
Bake Sale	Use homemade baked goods or contact local merchants about donating items.
Class Wars	Each grade does whatever they can to raise the most money within a certain period of time. Winning class gets a banner up in the school or prize to be determined by faculty.
Silly Teacher Activity	Kissing a pig, shaving your head, or wearing pajamas or a costume to school are just some suggestions for activities. \$1 per vote to choose which teacher has to do the task.
Bagger for a Day	Find a busy grocery store that is willing to help your group and pick a busy day of the week. Give your "baggers" a quick lesson on how to properly pack a bag, such as heavy items on the bottom and eggs and bread on top. Have a tip jar at the cash register.
Host a Rummage Sale	Get your parents, grandparents, and friends to donate items and hold this event in your school parking lot on a weekend morning.
Moustache Growing Contest	The male staff have a contest to see who can grow the best moustache and the students vote every day by putting money into collections jars with their teacher's name on it.
Pancake Breakfast	All you need is a large space with kitchen facilities, plenty of batter, and lots of volunteers. Think of other creative ways to raise money during the breakfast.
Coins 4 Kids (All information on running this event is available on www.poac.net under Ways to Help.)	Each class uses a bucket to collect coins. The buckets are weighed at the end of each week so everyone can track the leading homerooms. At the end of the month, the class that collects the most coins (in pounds) wins.