



# EVENT PLANNING GUIDE

**Parents Are the Key:  
Safe Teen Driving  
Communications Campaign**

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention



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**A primer on  
community events  
to raise awareness  
of the importance  
of safe teen driving**



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# INTRODUCTION

Parents Are the Key is a communications campaign developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to raise awareness about proven steps parents can take to reduce serious injury and death among teen drivers.

Properly planned and implemented community events can be highly effective for spreading messages about the importance of preventing teen motor vehicle crashes. If they're designed to be entertaining and/or educational, well-planned events can draw a great deal of attention to your cause and your messages.

What is the best time to raise awareness in your community of the "Parents Are the Key" campaign? You may consider holding an event during a health observance, such as National Safety Month (June) or National Teen Driver Safety Month (October), to help add momentum to your effort. Also, remember that seasonal events—such as homecoming, spring break, prom season, or graduation—are good times to spotlight safe teen driving.

Holding events throughout the year can help ensure that teen driver safety is a topic that stays on audiences' minds year-round.

This event planning guide was developed to assist you with planning and holding successful community events in conjunction with the "Parents Are the Key" campaign.

# PLANNING AN EVENT

When deciding what kind of event to hold, think about activities that might interest members of your community—such as parents of teen drivers—whose attention you are hoping to attract. Suggested activities are available in Event Planning Tools section.

## **Have these basics in mind before you begin planning the event:**

- What resources does your own organization have for organizing an event or events—manpower, budget, etc.?
- Are there other individuals and organizations in your community that you might be able to team up with to put on a well-attended and received event? These organizations may be commercial, nonprofit, faith-based, and/or governmental. You will need to have these basics in mind before you begin planning the event.

## **Setting up a Planning Team or Committee**

Once you decide to hold an event, gather a planning team or committee of people within your own organization as well as within other community organizations that might have an interest in this topic. Examples of groups to reach out to include traffic safety organizations, civic/community organizations (such as the PTA), law enforcement agencies, school districts, and health departments. Their perspectives and contacts with other members of the audience will be a valuable asset to your planning.

People with the following skills and experience should also be recruited for the committee:

- Strong leadership skills (committee chair)
- An eye for detail (logistics)
- The ability to raise money, if funds aren't available for the event (development)
- Media relations experience
- Event program planning experience

Once your team/committee is assembled, you should hold a brainstorming session to answer specific questions:

- What are the goals/objectives of the event?
  - ✓ What do you want members of your community to get out of participating in the event?
- Who is the target audience?
  - ✓ Are you targeting parents of teens as your primary audience?
- What resources are available?
  - ✓ Do you have a budget or do you need to raise funds to hold the event?
  - ✓ Are staff members or volunteers available to plan and work the event?
  - ✓ Can you access in-kind services, such as pro bono public relations services?
  - ✓ Do you have a resource for acquiring free giveaways?
  - ✓ Should you partner with other organizations to leverage existing resources?
- What type of event do you want to hold?
  - ✓ Seminar, health fair, luncheon, walks/runs, performances (See Event Planning Tools, Section VII, for a list of event ideas, along with suggested materials and products)
- Where should the event be held and when?
  - ✓ Will this event be held outside/inside? Do you need to reserve space? If so, what type of space? Are permits required for this type of event? How many people should it accommodate?

# DEVELOPING AN EVENT TIMELINE

To organize logistics for the event, you will need to track who is responsible for which tasks and when tasks need to be completed. An event planning timeline is a useful tool.

Developing a timeline, which includes specific milestones and due dates, should be one of the first tasks for the event planning committee/team. Using a timeline will help you to monitor progress toward the event. The timeline should identify the person or organization responsible for each task. The planning committee chairperson should circulate the timeline to all committee members and update it on a regular basis. Hold regular planning meetings with the committee, and track progress toward milestones at each planning meeting. If your group is large enough, you may want to set up subcommittees to handle separate components of the event—for example, logistics, partnership development, publicity, and program/agenda.

The amount of planning time will vary, depending on the type of event(s) you are planning. For example, it may take several months to plan a health fair, but only a few weeks to plan a press conference.

A sample event planning timeline and checklist for your use is included in the Event Planning Tools section on page 11.

# SELECTING PARTNERS FOR THE EVENT

Partnering with other agencies and organizations can increase the profile of your event. Finding the right partners and identifying the best role for them may take some time, but it is well worth the effort. Following are some recommendations for considering potential partners, deciding criteria for partnering, identifying suitable partners, and developing a partnership plan to outline their roles and responsibilities.

## Considering Potential Partners

The best partners are individuals and groups that share a common interest in your organization's mission, vision, and values. Think about whether groups you've worked with in the past may be interested in being involved in planning your "Parents Are the Key" event. Also consider partnering with groups such as the health department, local businesses, school districts or high schools, driver education schools, and faith-based organizations.

When thinking about partnering with an organization to host an event, take a moment to determine a clear purpose for the collaboration. For example, can the organization:

- Reach a particular group or audience?
- Disseminate materials and messages?
- Enhance the credibility of your program?
- Provide technical expertise to enhance your event?
- Assist with funding or provide in-kind services, such as printing, graphic design, or catering?



## Developing a Partnership Plan

Once you determine how you want to collaborate with a partner, an effective way to keep track of your activities is to develop a partnership plan. This plan documents all event details and roles and responsibilities for everyone involved in planning and holding the event. The size of your planning effort will determine how formal your plan needs to be.

## Tips for Establishing and Maintaining Partnerships

Once you have your partnership plan in place, there are several things you can do to facilitate a smooth collaboration:

- Choose organizations with the resources, expertise, and credibility your organization needs
- Consider what roles those partners might play
- Involve representatives from the partnering organizations as early as possible in the planning
- Provide partners with the rationale, strategies, messages, and materials
- Give partners advance notice of upcoming meetings and related activities
- Create a way to gently remind people of their responsibilities
- Develop a feedback mechanism so that activities can stay on track and adjustments can be made quickly
- Remember to thank all partners for a job well done.

The partnership planning template on page 16 may be a useful guide as you develop your own partnership plan.

# PROMOTING THE EVENT

To be successful, you need strong attendance for your event, and this is directly tied to how well you promote your event. You will want to use every means you have to get the word out through both the media and community channels. Partners and other community organizations can be effective in using their own networks to help you with promotion.

Media channels such as radio, television, cable television, and newspapers offer many opportunities for promoting your event. See the “Parents Are the Key: Media Outreach Guide” for details about promoting your event through paid and unpaid print and electronic media.

Community and organizational channels offer a number of ways to promote your event. Ask every partner and interested organization to help you by:

- Displaying announcements of the event
- Including notices about the event in their newsletters and on websites
- Handing out/displaying promotional brochures at their workplaces and businesses
- Helping you pay for commercial advertising, if necessary
- Making announcements/handing out promotional notices at community and faith-based meetings and other gatherings
- Encouraging participation at the event by employees/clients/customers

# EVENT DAY

**When your planning is complete and the event day has arrived, you should:**

- Arrive at the venue several hours before the event starts so that you can ensure that the venue is set up properly and that audiovisual equipment is operating.
- Use a checklist to ensure that all tasks are completed.
- Ensure that everyone working the event has an agenda and knows where they need to be and what is going on at all times.
- Use a designated person to handle all questions from media, participants, and volunteers. For large events, you may consider using an information booth.



# EVALUATING THE EVENT

Knowing if you achieved the goals and objectives that were established for your event is important, especially if you plan to hold the same type of event in the future. There are many ways to evaluate your event efficiently and cost-effectively. Depending on how your planning committee is organized, you may wish to designate one person to coordinate the overall evaluation, with different subcommittees in charge of the actual evaluation tasks. For example, someone from the publicity subcommittee could monitor media coverage, someone from the logistics subcommittee could track who comes to the event, and someone from the program/agenda subcommittee could distribute evaluation forms to participants and analyze the results.

**By asking some simple questions, you can get a good idea of your event's reach and impact. Here are some ideas for evaluating your event:**

- Ask attendees to complete a brief evaluation form at the conclusion of the event. Ask which sessions/activities they found most useful, what they thought of the speaker(s), how they would rate the logistical aspects of the event (e.g., venue, food) and what they would recommend for future events.
- Tally the financial and in-kind contributions to the event that were made by partners, local businesses, etc. This information can be helpful for securing donor funding in the future.
- Track who showed up at your event. In addition to obtaining the number of attendees for the event, also look at who showed up, so that you can see whether you reached your target audience.
- Track how many materials were distributed at the event—both to participants and the media.
- Track media coverage of your event. Scan local newspapers and news websites before and after the event and clip articles about the event. If television or radio reporters cover the event, ask them when they believe that their stories will air. If possible, assign committee members to watch/listen to the coverage and record it. If you anticipate a lot of media coverage and have sufficient funds, you can hire a media clipping service to monitor all of the media coverage. Some popular clipping services are Burrelles Luce ([www.burrellesluce.com](http://www.burrellesluce.com)) and Bacon's ([www.bacons.com](http://www.bacons.com)).

# EVENT PLANNING TOOLS

The event planning timeline and checklist and partnership planning guide are tools designed to help you stay organized as you plan an exciting and successful event that will raise awareness of the importance of safe teen driving. The activity and event ideas can be used as presented, modified to meet your community's needs, or used to spur the development of new events and activities.

## Event Planning Timeline and Checklist

For tasks related to media, please refer to the Media Outreach Guide.

### As Soon as Possible after the first event planning meeting

- ✓ Reserve your venue. If your event is likely to draw media attention, be sure to select a venue that includes a quiet place where members of the media can conduct individual interviews with event spokespersons.
- ✓ Recruit partners for the event. (See Potential Organizations to Involve in the Event Planning Tools section, for a list of organizations that might be approached for partnership and/or promotional support.)

### 6 to 8 weeks before the event

- ✓ Invite speakers—consider local dignitaries, such as the mayor or an alderman, a spokesperson who is well versed and knowledgeable about teen driver safety, and perhaps those representing some of the local organizations serving teens and their parents.
- ✓ Request a proclamation from local government officials.
- ✓ Order materials, signs, banners, awards, and other giveaway items. (This is one area in which community partners can be handy for providing needed financial support, in-kind services, or giveaways.) Free materials, such as flyers, fact sheets, and posters, are available at [www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey](http://www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey).

## 4 to 6 weeks before the event

- ✓ Schedule training and preparation for all spokespersons.
- ✓ Have on hand adequate promotional materials.
- ✓ Have on hand an adequate supply of “Parents Are the Key” campaign materials, as well as other program materials and giveaways.
- ✓ Establish a mechanism for reordering materials if more are needed for future events.
- ✓ Establish a mechanism to identify potential problems and track the success of the event.
- ✓ Update or develop your media list to make sure that you have the correct phone numbers and email addresses for reporters who would be likely to cover your event.
- ✓ Identify community calendar contacts for all local media and their deadlines, and distribute your media advisory or calendar announcement.
- ✓ Recruit event volunteers, staff, and vendors (such as audiovisual techs, if needed, a photographer, a caterer, etc.).
- ✓ Arrange for equipment if it will not be provided by the site. Equipment might include tables (with draping), easels for signs, a podium, a stage or riser, microphone(s), and a sound system. For a news conference or an event with a celebrity, you might also need a “mult box,” a device that allows broadcast media to record directly from the sound system.
- ✓ Create a guest list and invite guests. Assure that invitations have been issued to all involved in putting together the event.
- ✓ Begin an initial promotion alerting the community to the upcoming event; for example, hang “Parents Are the Key” posters in various common areas of the community or in places of businesses frequented by parents of teens, such as grocery stores, local driver education schools, etc.

## 2 to 4 weeks before the event

- ✓ Assure that partners are prepared to do their roles.
- ✓ Prepare your news release, a backgrounder, a fact sheet, an agenda, etc. (see the Media Outreach Guide for samples that you can use.)
- ✓ Conduct more intensive promotion efforts to ensure a good attendance.

## 1 to 2 weeks before the event

- ✓ Send out your media advisory.
- ✓ Update your website.
- ✓ Send staff and volunteers the event schedule, a list of responsibilities, and directions to the site. Provide copies of materials to anyone who will be responding to inquiries before, during, or after the event.
- ✓ Assist speakers with developing their remarks, if necessary. Gather brief biographies for the moderator to use to introduce speakers.
- ✓ Check on the status of materials you ordered and make a checklist of supplies you'll need on site, such as pens, sign-in sheets, business cards, and "Parents Are the Key" campaign materials.
- ✓ Continue community promotion activities.

## 1 week before the event

- ✓ Confirm space, volunteers, and equipment.
- ✓ If you will be photographing, videotaping, or otherwise recording the event, distribute consent forms. (Note: consent forms are not required for news coverage but may be needed for taking and using photographs or recordings of attendees.)
- ✓ Follow up with key media to confirm their receipt of the advisory and to encourage them to attend the event.
- ✓ Assemble press kits. (See Media Outreach Guide)

## 1 to 2 days before the event

- ✓ Resend the media advisory to your entire media list.
- ✓ Continue calling your media targets.
- ✓ Gather and pack supplies.
- ✓ Make arrangements for responding to calls while you and others are at the event. Brief the office staff, update your outgoing voice mail message, and distribute your cell phone number and/or inform office staff as to whether you will check voice mail during the event.

## At the event

- ✓ Greet media when they arrive and give them a press kit. Ask them to sign in so you can track attendance.
- ✓ Greet any special invited guests (“VIPs”) and have someone responsible for showing them to their places.
- ✓ Introduce media to your spokespersons for interviews and alert them to photo opportunities.

## After the event

- ✓ Follow up on any special requests made during the event by the media, speakers, etc. For example, reporters might ask for a bio or “head shot” of a specific speaker or they might ask for data or other information that was not readily accessible.
- ✓ Send press kits to journalists who expressed interest but did not attend the event.
- ✓ Monitor newspapers, radio, television, and the internet for coverage.
- ✓ Obtain contact sheets or prints from photographers and order photos for your internal publications and for your partners or sponsors, speakers, special guests, etc.
- ✓ Write an article about the event for your organization and encourage partners and sponsors to do the same.
- ✓ Send a letter to the editor of your daily newspaper to thank volunteers publicly for making the event a success and ask the editor to consider it for publication.
- ✓ Thank sponsors, partners, and volunteers directly, in-person or preferably with a letter of appreciation.
- ✓ Hold a debriefing with all involved to discuss what worked and what didn’t work during event planning, and during the event, and why. Those experiences can be

used to plan future events.

**A. Partnership Planning Guide**

<b>Overall Purpose of the Partnership</b>			
To leverage existing community resources and assets in support of a community event designed to promote safe teen driving and help save young lives in the community.			
<b>Brief Description of the Event</b>			
<b>Participating Partners</b> (list the names of all individuals and organizations)			
<b>Desired Outcomes of the Event</b>			
<b>Major Activities for the Event</b>			
<b>Needed Resources</b>			
<b>Resource</b>	<b>Who Provides</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Timing</b>
Access to people			
Communication			
Expertise			
Facility/Venue			
Funding			
Staff			
Giveaways			
<b>Action Steps</b>			
<b>Step</b>	<b>Who is Responsible</b>	<b>Due Date</b>	<b>How Tracked</b>

**B. Activity and Event Ideas**

The suggestions below represent a range of events and activities that you can schedule throughout the year.

You may want to consider holding one or several events in a series. For example, you could consider a series of events that run during homecoming, spring break, prom season, and graduation to extend the life and reach of your efforts.

### **Potential Organizations to Involve**

Individual organizations may find it possible to do some of these events on their own. Other events will require cooperation and partnerships with local nonprofit, business, and/or governmental organizations. Examples of potential partners among local organizations include:

- Local government and nonprofits such as:
  - Departments of motor vehicles or driver services
  - Health department
  - Community/recreation centers
  - Volunteer organizations such as Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and Junior League
- Faith-based organizations
- Local merchants
  - Fitness centers and health clubs
  - Movie theaters
  - Supermarkets
  - Auto service centers
  - Malls
- Local businesses with large numbers of employees and employee assistance program counselors
- Local parent-teacher associations (PTAs)
- Local media outlets (see the Media Outreach Guide)

### **Activity Ideas**

Following are examples of activities that organizations and their partners may wish to undertake to help spread the word about the “Parents Are the Key” campaign.

- **Poster the town:** Find places in your community where parents go, especially with their new teen drivers. These may include movie theaters, departments of motor vehicles, supermarkets, gas stations, auto service centers, and malls. Ask the management of these outlets to display campaign posters and flyers in high-traffic areas. For smaller businesses, such as video stores and pizza parlors, ask the management to include a flyer in their video or pizza boxes.
- **Piggyback on an event:** Grab the attention of local parents at a football game, car wash, or other high school event. Ask community leaders to get involved and help distribute posters and flyers. Remember that seasonal events—such as homecoming, spring break, prom season, or graduation—are good times to spotlight safe teen driving.
- **Work with school districts and high schools:** Contact your local school district officials and parent-teacher associations (PTA) and ask if they can help spread the word to parents. Propose that school administrators share the “Parents Are the Key” fact sheet, newsletter article, and Web site link. Remind them that crashes are the #1 killer of teens. Chances are, they will listen.
- **Partner with local driver education schools:** Contact the instructors and management of local driver education schools. Ask if they would promote the “Parents Are the Key” Web site when parents enroll their teens in class. Suggest they use the “Parents Are the Key: Parent-Teen Driving Contract” in their curriculum.
- **Talk to your employees and colleagues:** Perhaps you employ or work with parents who have teenage drivers. Let them know that car crashes can happen to any teen simply because of driver inexperience. Point out that the “Parents Are the Key” materials can help their child avoid a crash and encourage them to visit the Web site. Share copies of the newsletter article, poster and flyer.

If you are a parent or have access to parents of teen drivers, here are some places where you can start a safe teen driving conversation:



- **At work:** Talk with your coworkers who are also parents of teen drivers or soon-to-be teen drivers. Display posters and flyers on bulletin boards. Email “Parents Are the Key” materials to your work friends. Ask your human resources department to place materials on everyone’s desk or share them via email. Place an article in your company newsletter.
- **At parent-teacher association (PTA) meetings:** Suggest that your local PTA chapter discuss safe teen driving. Plan a safe teen driving program and invite a speaker. National safety organizations, such as National Safety Council and National Organizations for Youth Safety, may have local chapters that could provide speakers. Staff from local law enforcement, highway safety, public health, and medical groups also can serve as spokespeople about safe teen driving. Distribute flyers and materials.
- **At faith-based organizations:** Ask your religious leaders to address the importance of safe teen driving. Post materials on bulletin boards and place an article in the newsletter.
- **Through online social networks and blogs:** Are you a member of Facebook? Or Twitter? Or do you have your own blog? Online social networks and blogs are ideal places to spread safe teen driving messages among your friends. Post a link to [www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey](http://www.cdc.gov/parentsarethekey) and ask your friends to explore the site. Add the “Parents Are the Key” widget to your blog or send a safe driving e-card. Create an online group so parents can talk with other parents about safe teen driving.
- **Through parent social groups:** Do you meet with other parent friends for bowling, card games, lunch, or book club? Don’t be shy about bringing up safe teen driving. Your friends may even enjoy discussing how they set and enforce the rules with their own teens.
- **At health clubs:** Your local fitness center, health club, or YMCA can be a good place to display materials and talk with other parents. You can reach both parents and teens, as some families make physical fitness a family outing.
- **At school-based sporting events:** Going to your child’s track meet or baseball game? Strike up a safe teen driving conversation with other parents in the stands.
- **At volunteer organizations:** Groups such as Rotary Clubs, Kiwanis Clubs, and Junior League are a good way to reach fellow parents. If you belong to one of these, or something similar, talk to members about safe teen driving. Share materials and spread the word.





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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control**

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