



Williams Syndrome Awareness Month



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Walk for Williams Planning Manual

We are thrilled that you have decided to coordinate a Walk for Williams. Walks are a fun and healthy way to bring families and friends together and spread awareness. Use this guide to save time and stay organized, confident in the knowledge that you have everything covered.

So the first question is...Where do I start?

Here is a prioritized list (details for these in upcoming pages):

- Make early decisions/up front to do lists
- Gather a committee and volunteers
- Get sponsors and donations
- Publicize and promote
- Secure auction and raffle items
- Manage registration, finances, and awards
- Plan post walk social activities/party
- Plan the site, walking route, set-up, and clean up
- Wrap-up

Early Decision Checklist

- Goals
- Getting specific about WS and the WSA
- Date, location, route
- Insurance Requirements
- Your Walk and the WSA
- Technology and social media
- Celebration Plans

Goals

The main goal of Williams Syndrome Awareness Month is to inform the general public about Williams syndrome. Getting the word out will assist us in helping individuals with WS and their families by educating our communities about the abilities of this diverse group. Our secondary goal is to raise the necessary funds to support the continuing work of the WSA. These supportive dollars will increase our ability to stimulate research, and develop more programs, opportunities and resources for those with Williams syndrome and their families.

- What will you do to draw the maximum amount of attention to your event? What is the reason you walk?
- What are your monetary and attendance goals? Are you planning to augment the event via sponsorships, concessions, a raffle, a silent auction, or other money raising efforts?

Getting Specific about Williams syndrome and the WSA

Our goal for WS Awareness Month is to help ensure that individuals come away with a better understanding of Williams syndrome. Are you able to provide a well-rounded 30 second description? Sending a clear message comfortably can assist the outcome of any conversation. This tool can be used when approaching potential sponsors, in-kind donors, volunteers, walkers and anyone you may meet along the way.

Example:

WS is a genetic disorder present at birth that can affect anyone. Medical and developmental problems, including cardiovascular disease and learning disabilities, typically occur side-by-side with striking abilities such as heightened music and social connections.

It is important to have the same comfort level and knowledge when speaking about the WSA.

Example:

The Williams Syndrome Association is the most comprehensive resource for people and families living with WS as well as doctors, researchers and educators. The WSA provides the resources and referrals that families need, and a strong and supportive community with which to connect throughout their child's life.

To learn more about Williams syndrome and the WSA, visit www.williams-syndrome.org.

Date, Location, Route

The majority of Walks-for-Williams are held during Williams Syndrome Awareness Month. However, this is not a priority. Feel free to pick a day that works best for your schedule and be certain to check your community calendar for any conflicting events.

Consider the following factors when you choose your site and route:

- The location should lend itself to setting up a route that is a loop so that people can walk varying distances.
- For children, an ideal length for your route is $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. For adults, one to three miles is typical.
- Is the area safe?
- Is there adequate parking?
- Are there rental fees associated?
- Are there adequate facilities including restrooms, shade, seating, concessions, and electrical power? Or can you augment appropriately?
- Is the neighborhood amenable to having a large event?

Reach agreement between your committee and the individual who controls the site on the date and exact location, and if necessary, obtain written permission.

Insurance Requirements

The WSA carries general liability insurance that will extend to your walk. When considering locations, be certain to inquire if proof of insurance is needed. If so, please contact the WSA National Office and we will provide all of the necessary documents.

Your Walk and the WSA

How does the WSA offer support?

Coordinator Care Package

What does the care package include?

- One Vinyl 3x5 foot Awareness Month Banner (this will need to be returned)
- Copies of your event flyer
- Color copies of the Sponsorship Brochure
- Credit Card slips , and receipt booklet
- Walk up registration forms
- Copies of *What is Williams Syndrome?* and *Who is the WSA?* informational postcards
- Your Walk Reconciliation Envelope
- Raffle items, store Items, tattoos, etc.

Additional Resources

You will be given a private link to event support materials. These materials will assist in securing sponsorships, press and donations.

What can I expect to see?

- Sample budget
- Solicitation letter for in-kind services
- WS/WSA Messaging Flyer
- Press releases
- Walk donation forms
- Credit card forms
- 501 C3 tax letter
- Informational brochures

Your Walk and the WSA ~ Cont'd

Event Flyer

The WSA will create a flyer specific to your event. This flyer will be shared with you for revisions, corrections and approval. Once completed, this flyer is a great tool for marketing and publicizing your event (refer to the publicizing section of this manual, Pg. 12).

How will the WSA share my flyer?

- We will post your flyer on the WSA Event Calendar and on your Regional Facebook page
- 2 months prior to your event, we will mail hard copies to WSA families within 100 miles of the event
- A region specific email blast containing your flyer will be sent two months prior to the event
- We will include 25 copies of your flyer and posters in your Coordinator Care Package

Online Registration and Donation Pages

The WSA will make registration and donations easy. Our office will create online registration and donation pages with easy step by step instructions. As the walk coordinator, you will receive a private link to view all activity associated with your walk, including number of walkers, names of walkers, shirt sizes and dollars raised. Because these lists are electronic, we are able to keep registration open until three days prior to the event.

Registration Fees:

- \$20 per individual
- \$50 for a family of 4 and \$10 each additional family member

Awareness Month T-Shirts

Each individual who registers three weeks prior to the event will receive a free t-shirt. The WSA office will tally your counts, share the detailed sizes with our printer and your order will be drop shipped directly to you. In addition to your pre-registered shirts, your order will include up to 10 volunteer shirts, and 20 extra shirts (store, walk up registration) in accordance with your needs.

Online Technology

Social Media

Facebook is a valuable resource when trying to get the word out about your event. The National Office will create an event page for your region. Encourage member families to comment, share and post to their personal pages.

Request to join the WSA Walk for Williams Coordinator Page. This is a private page set up specifically for our coordinators. This hot spot is a great resource to connect with other coordinators, and keep up to date on the latest information

E-mails

The WSA National Office will highlight your walk in an email blast to your entire region two months prior to your event. This email will include all of your walk details and resources. This is sent to our WSA contacts—you will need to forward or connect with those who are not.

Additional Resources

- Google+
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Snap Chat
- Facebook/Facebook Live
- Instagram
- Active.com

Please use the your regional Facebook page, Twitter and any other social media site you frequent to spread the word!

Celebration Plans

Does your vision include some kind of event enhancements? Start considering what type of extras you would like to include. Food, raffle, silent auction, face painting, inflatables, or games? Make a wish list that includes potential resources for in-kind donations.

Committee and Volunteers

You may decide to champion the planning and logistics for your walk alone. Others choose to recruit individuals and build a committee. Your volunteers and committee members can be built of WSA friends and families and/or personal friends and family. The WSA can send an email blast to the region to cast a net, or support you in planning a small event to gauge interest in joining the committee. Once you recruit individuals, be certain to have meaningful work or projects for them to take on.

Great tasks for pre-event volunteers and committee members include:

- Solicit sponsors
- Solicit In-Kind donations (water, food, etc.)
- Hang flyers in local businesses
- Community Outreach (Local papers, community calendars)
- Walker Recruitment (Churches, book clubs, girl/boy scout troops, community sports teams)
- Event Enhancement Planning Committee (face painting, games, refreshments, entertainment)
- Silent Auction and Raffle Committee (secure donations for silent auction and raffle)

On the day of the event you will need many hands:

- Set-up
- Registration and Check-in
- Course Volunteers (to make sure the registrants stay on the correct route)
- Refreshment Station
- Greeters (direct people to registration, bathrooms and refreshments and answer questions along the way)
- Walk Leaders and Walk Sweepers (managing the end of the line of walkers).
- Raffle Tickets
- Silent Auction
- Clean-up

Committee and Volunteers ~ Cont'd

Great resources for Volunteers:

- Churches, synagogues, mosques etc.
- Boy/Girl Scout Troops
- Cheerleading/Dance Teams
- Kohl's Cares, Starbucks, Target – are just a few of the business that give back with volunteers and donations
- National Honor Society or service club students from the local high school
- Volunteermatch.org (announce your volunteer needs here)

You would be surprised at how many individuals say “I would love to volunteer, but no one has ever asked.”



Get Sponsors and Donations

All of the materials you'll need to reach out to sponsors and donors is included on the additional resources page <http://www.williams-syndrome.org/additional-awareness-week-resources>. There you will find a request letter, full color brochure and our 501c3 designation letter should you need proof for a sponsor etc. Start talking to people now, because some companies take a while to process requests. Friends and family are always great resources for additional contacts (sponsors and auction donations), ideas and support.

Suggestions to get you started:

- It's all about connections. Who do you know? Can they put you in touch with the right person?
- Your child's therapists and physicians are often eager to make a donation.
- Many companies offer volunteer/donation match programs, so reach out to family and friends
- Costco and Sam's Clubs often donate water but fyi: applications must be submitted months in advance.
- Do you have a market or grocer that you frequent? Another great source for water or snacks
- Do you have a friend who owns a restaurant or a small business?
- Don't let NO discourage you...cast a wide net on asks

When approaching companies for sponsorships, some may wish to have recognition at the event.

Below are some sponsorship options--availability based on level of sponsorship (levels outlined in sponsorship brochure):

- Company's logo on the walk banner.
- Company's logo on all walk specific print material.
- Vendor table at the event ex: Sam's club could sponsor water and have a table at the event selling club memberships (confirm that your location allows vendors)
- A Company's logo on Walk Shirts.
- A Company's print materials in registrants bags.

Publicize and Promote

This is where we rely on the coordinator, the committee and the volunteers the most. Your personal connections, the businesses you visit everyday and the ability to speak to individuals face to face is invaluable. Use day to day contact as an opportunity to share as much information as you can.

- When patronizing local businesses, always have a flyer (and tape/push pins) on hand, and ask if you can post the flyer in the window or on the community board. Speak to the manager about different opportunities for involvement in your event. Invite them to walk with you (team building), donate goods, or sponsor through monetary donations.
- Is your child a member of an extracurricular team or troop? Speak to the coach or leader and ask if they are looking for philanthropic opportunities to engage their group.
- Reach out to your child's school or PTA to see if a school-wide awareness day is possible. We can supply you appropriate print materials and/or videos that outline the disorder to distribute to each classroom. The school may allow you the opportunity to have a fundraiser on that day. Sell popcorn, candy or ice cream after school, hat day (donate a \$1 and you get to wear a hat to school), jeans day at the office (similar to hat day), loose change collection, etc.
- Community newspapers offer an events section. Call the paper and ask to be included in the calendar—both in print and online. Submit detailed information about Williams syndrome (use the press release from your additional resources), your walk and why you are personally involved...you may be asked to write or be interviewed for a featured article.
- The press release can also be shared with your local television networks. Williams Syndrome Awareness Month is a national event and it has been known to be featured as the community segment in many locales.
- Send personal invitations to individuals and ask them to walk alongside you and support your cause.

- Family and Friends
- Your child's classmates and their friends' parents
- Your child's therapists, doctors and teachers
- Your WSA regional address book
- Facebook, Twitter etc.

Secure Silent Auction and Raffle Items

Raffles and silent auctions are one of the most popular and cost effective ways to raise money for a non profit organization. However, to make a raffle or auction successful, you must first secure desirable items.

The best place to start is to survey the members of your committee, family and friends and your WSA region. Every supporter could possibly have something of value to contribute to the prize pool. And if not, they may know somebody who does.

These are just a few examples:

- A handmade quilt or afghan
- Do you have a friend who sells Tupperware? Would they donate a cake carrier? You are certain to know someone willing to bake the cake
- A friend's cottage would make a great weekend get away
- A college student willing to donate Babysitting (for an event where everyone knows each other)
- A chef willing to offer private in-home cooking lessons for 2 couples
- A basket of spirits – each committee member donates one bottle of “spirits” to build an exciting party basket
- If you receive a handful of smaller items, try pairing them together to make one larger item
- A friend who owns a dealership may be willing to donate a convertible for a weekend or a lease for a year
- Does your company offer season tickets? Does a friend own some?

When reaching out to local businesses, begin canvassing your community now. Come prepared with a request letter, a copy of our 501c3, an information flyer and a donation form (for those wanting a tax receipt). Every business is a viable option and it never hurts to ask. Again, don't let NO discourage you, because another door will open.

Some popular items:

- Gift Certificates from restaurants, coffee shops or ice cream parlors , nail and hair salons
- Tickets to a show, a theatre or local players club
- Doggie day care or boarding facility
- Day pass to parks, zoos or beaches
- Golfing, autographed memorabilia, or Cigar Packages

Manage Registration and Finances

Online Registration

The WSA national office will build, monitor and manage all online registration aspects. Once individuals begin to register, you will receive periodic updates, and receive a private link to check your registration at anytime. These updates will include number of walkers, names and current monies raised.

Event Day Registration

“Day of” registration will be one of the busiest times of the day because some people just wait—and we welcome them! Make certain you have enough volunteers and that the people you choose are friendly, quick to respond, comfortable handling money and do well under pressure.

Each coordinator will receive a *Coordinator Care Package*, which includes all of the necessary items for registration: receipt books, credit card donation slips, reconciliation envelope (to return walk paperwork), walk up registration forms and a banner for easy identification.

Don't forget the little things like pens, garbage bags, paper weights (if it is windy), and a table and chairs if necessary.

Finances

Each walk is given an operating budget based on the size and the anticipated income. Expenses are generally kept within 10% or less of expected gross proceeds. All expenses must be pre-approved. Typical expenses are location rental fees, food and beverage or event enhancement activities. You must supply the WSA with receipts, invoices or contracts to justify the expenses and the WSA office will reimburse you. Or you can send the contracts and/or invoice directly to us for signature and payment.

Do not reconcile your own receipts from monies collected. The WSA office must keep a formal count of all expenses and provide reimbursements.

Use your reconciliation envelope to organize all of the papers and documents. Following the walk, complete the attached form and return this envelope along with all donations, receipts and the WSA Banner to the WSA national office. Please DO NOT send cash. Convert all cash to a money order at your local bank or grocery store.

Post Walk

Food and Beverage

If you are planning to have a post event meet and greet picnic, food and beverage is a necessity. Individuals will require nourishment following the walk. Walk coordinators often receive donations from local restaurants, markets and grocery chains.

If your event is being held at a park that has a grill, one of the easiest and most manageable options is hot dogs, individual beverages and chips. All of these items are fairly inexpensive and can easily be donated by one or more local businesses. If you are not able to find stores to donate the items, they can be purchased in bulk at low cost. These costs can be included with the entry fee or food can be made available for a minimal donation or may even fit within your budget. **Note:** Make certain to start the coals early so they are nice and hot when it comes time to get started. Begin grilling about 10 minutes before the walkers are scheduled to return. This will require having someone designated for the role prior to the event.

Enhancements

Keeping everyone busy with post-walk fun is always well received. Fun doesn't have to be expensive--it's all about what you can do with what you already have or what you can borrow.

Some inspiring ideas:

- Outdoor Games, Bocce Ball, Badminton, Washer Toss, Ladder Toss, etc.
- Hula Hoops, Bubbles, Jump Ropes
- Water balloon toss or egg drop
- Face Painters (teenage siblings are great with this project)
- Dancing and Music, live or an iPod with speakers
- Magician or clown

Volunteers

Volunteers are the foundation to make certain that everything is in place when the walkers return. Pick specific individuals to handle each area - food and beverage, games, music, etc. Prior to the event or before registration begins, have a volunteer meeting to hand out assignments and get everyone motivated for the day. Make certain each volunteer understands their role and your expectations. Don't forget to thank them so they'll volunteer next year!

Plan the Site, Walking Route, Set-Up, Clean-Up

Plan the Site

Visit the site a week prior to the event to assess the area. At this point you should make definitive decisions. Where will you be setting up registration? Make certain the location is central to the parking lot, restrooms and the route. If you have access to a covered location, this is the preference. It can offer additional comfort for all types of weather conditions.

If you have a moon bounce or games, find an open area a bit off to the side. You want to be certain individuals won't be crossing the "line of fire". We suggest making a map. This will be useful to the committee and volunteers.

Walk the Route

During your site visit, take a moment to walk the route and make certain there are no obstacles...branches in the path, water over the path or forks in the road that could easily get someone lost. Signs or volunteers should be posted at any obstacles for everyone's safety. If the event is at a park or walking/hiking path, be certain to have volunteers with a cell phone at the rear of the group. This safety feature will ensure that no walker will be left behind.

Setting up and cleaning up

Be very "up front" with the volunteers that you recruit for set-up and clean-up. This is an active role that requires some manual labor - lifting tables, stacking bottles of water or carting boxes of shirts is in the job description. Set-up and clean-up is a great job for students trying to earn their NHS or other community service hours.

Make sure you think ahead for any supplies you may need. Consider each individual station and make a separate list.

Example: If you are grilling you will need:

- Charcoal, lighter fluid and matches and grilling utensils
- Hot Dogs and buns, coolers and ice for back up supplies
- Napkins, plates and condiments
- Garbage bags (in case the park trash gets full)
- Foil wrappers (to keep the hot dogs warm and make distribution easy)

Plan the site, Walking route, Set-up, and Clean-up ~ Cont'd

Cleaning up

When it comes time to clean up, be respectful of the community that loaned you the space. Walk the grounds for litter, return picnic tables you may have moved, and take a peek into the restrooms to make certain your group was respectful of the facility. These extra steps will only take a few minutes of your time, and the venue will appreciate your efforts and look forward to welcoming you back next year.

Wrapping up

The event is over and it was a success! Take a moment to celebrate your achievements (and breathe). Invite all of the volunteers to a wrap-up session. Discuss your success and the items that could improve in the next year, keeping detailed notes in electronic form so they are easily shareable.

Prepare a list of all of the individuals who donated, sponsored or gave of their time. Divvy up the list and write thank you notes. Have pen, paper, envelopes and addresses available.

Complete your Walk Reconciliation envelope (see directions on previous page). Be certain to include everyone's receipts, invoices and contracts. Return this with the banner to the WSA national Office

It's not too early to ask for a commitment for Awareness Month for the following year. Ask if you can count on them while they are still excited about the event's success.

Thank you for supporting the Williams Syndrome Association