

Live to Give: How to Coordinate a Successful Blood Drive

Blood drive coordinators play a vital role in collecting lifesaving blood for patients. Without people to plan blood drives, blood banks would not have as many opportunities to collect blood from donors.

Planning a blood drive is fun and easy—however, like planning any event, it takes time. Fortunately, the ICF LIVE TO GIVE Committee and a blood bank representative will help you every step of the way.

The following are helpful tips on planning your blood drive:

1. **Find a location.** A church hall is ideal. If you do not have access to a big building, you can coordinate with a store, a business, or any location to have a blood mobile come instead.
2. **Find out the what blood bank serves your area.** For example, the American Red Cross and Blood Centers of the Pacific serve the East Bay.
3. **Set a date** (three to six months ahead of time), and contact your local blood bank.
4. **Set a goal.** Your blood bank representative will help you decide how many units of blood you want to collect at your blood drive. Remember, you will need to schedule an additional number of donor appointments to assure that you reach your collection goal.
5. **Plan a theme for your blood drive (optional).** A luau, Mardi Gras, Viva Italian, rock and roll—let your creativity flow!
6. **Give away free items (optional, but really appreciated by donors).** It is always nice to thank your blood donors with little gifts that you buy or get donated. The blood bank often also has giveaways to contribute. Setting up a raffle is also a fun way to add spice to your blood drive. Some ideas for giveaways:
 - Gift cards—you can get small denominations from Starbuck's, Jamba Juice or a local ice cream store. A little goes a long way!
 - Candy and treats.
 - Pens.
 - Items with the ICF logo or the logo for the thalassemia program at Children's Hospital Los Angeles.
 - Canvas bags—a great prize item, and all your other giveaways can go inside.Ideas for raffle prizes are as follows:
 - Gift cards to movies (Regal, AMC); clothing stores (GAP, Old Navy, Macy's); retail/food (Target, Safeway, restaurants).
 - Themed gift baskets are wonderful for this—for example, a spa kit; a snack basket; or an Italian-themed food basket.
7. **Promote the event.** About six weeks prior to the blood drive, start promoting the event. Your blood bank will provide flyers—you can hang them at the location of your event and in surrounding areas/stores, etc. Plan to distribute (in person or via postal mail) smaller flyers to friends, family, and your community. Promote your blood drive through

e-mail and social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Plan to send weekly reminders starting four weeks prior to your blood drive.

8. **Recruit volunteers.** The blood bank phlebotomists and nurses will be responsible for collections, registration, intake, and the canteen (snack stand). You will need to recruit volunteers to greet people, run your raffle, and distribute prizes.
9. **Gather literature to give away the day of the drive.**
 - Give out literature on your organization (ICF brochures).
 - If you are doing a blood drive in honor of a specific disease such as Cooley's anemia (thalassemia), make sure that you get literature about the disease.
 - Give out ICF blood donation postcards so that people can donate in honor of someone or as a gift
10. **Schedule appointments.** While publicity is important, there is nothing like a personal touch—contact friends, family members, and fellow churchgoers and educate them on the importance of donating blood. The blood bank will also send e-mails to prior donors in their database. Appointments can be scheduled online.
11. **Inform yourself.** Learn about donor eligibility guidelines; information on the blood bank website; and the sign-up process. It is vital to be informed so that you can answer questions and/or direct people regarding where to find the information they need.
12. **Communicate with your blood bank representative.** Communicate regarding donor appointment sign-ups; the day's schedule; room setup, etc.
13. **Reconfirm appointments about one week prior to your blood drive.** This can be accomplished via a postcard, e-mail, or phone call. Also remind donors to drink plenty of water and eat a good meal prior to donating.
14. **Be ready for the day of the blood drive.** Arrive when the blood bank staff arrives to greet them and help set up; assure that the room temperature is adequate; orient your volunteers; and organize your welcome and prize tables. Depending on the number of appointments and the population that is donating, you may get walk-in donors—make sure the lines of communication between you and your blood bank staff stay open to assure that the maximum number of units are collected.
15. **HAVE FUN!** Show the donors your full appreciation and enjoy the blood drive. At the end of the day, give yourself a pat on the back—your hard work, time, and creativity were instrumental in collecting blood donations and saving lives.

For more information or for assistance planning a blood drive, please contact:

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