

WALK WITH US TO PREVENT SUICIDE

Team Captain Toolkit

Updated 4.2023



**American
Foundation
for Suicide
Prevention**



**OUT OF THE
DARKNESS**

Welcome

Thank You for being an **Out of the Darkness **Community Walk Team Captain!****

As a Team Captain you play an essential part in the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's (AFSP) efforts to create a world without suicide. This year, a quarter of a million people will unite across more than 400 Walks nationwide to save lives and bring hope to those affected by suicide.

Why Walk As A Team:

- **Community**

When we join together to participate in the walk we are joining together to say that we cannot let suicide be ignored, that those who have struggled and still struggle are loved, and that we will Be The Voice to #StopSuicide.

- **Growth**

The more we talk, the more connections we make. As a Team Captain your job is to invite others to join you. Every year, more people join an Out of the Darkness Community Walk to support a friend and end up becoming lifelong supporters of AFSP. That is the effect a Team Captain can have.

- **Easier Fundraising**

Out of the Darkness Community Walk teams tend to have a much easier time fundraising for the event. More team members mean there are more people in your extended network, and you never know who has been affected by suicide. What better way to honor a loved one or open up the conversation about mental health than hosting a local fundraising event that will not only get people talking, but also raise funds that will be making real change within the community.

- **Support**

The first step is never an easy one, but when we take that step together, we learn that it is much easier to continue to heal. Many walkers would have never taken their first step towards healing if it wasn't for the support of the team that surrounded them during an Out of the Darkness Community Walk. As a Team Captain, when you invite others to walk with you, you may be supporting the most important first step they ever take.

Being on a team enhances the experience of each and every one of your team members, providing a built-in support system and a goal towards which you will all strive (and stride) together. As a team captain, your role is vital to the success of the Out of the Darkness Walks. On average, team captains recruit about 74% of the people who attend a non-profit walk. That's right. YOU are inspiring your family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and everyone in your network to get involved in suicide prevention. YOU are showing them that they are not alone in their experience! Additionally, the teams you lead raise about 87% of the revenue that funds research, educational programs, advocacy, and support for those affected by suicide.

YOU are leading the fight against suicide.

So again, we THANK YOU for joining us and look forward to seeing you at the walk!

With gratitude,

AFSP and the Out of the Darkness Walks Staff and
Volunteers walks@afsp.org



About AFSP

Mission

Save Lives and Bring Hope to Those Affected by Suicide

Established in 1987, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is a voluntary health organization that gives those affected by suicide a nationwide community empowered by research, education and advocacy to take action against this leading cause of death.

AFSP is dedicated to saving lives and bringing hope to those affected by suicide. AFSP creates a culture that's smart about mental health by engaging in the following core strategies:

- Funding scientific research
- Educating the public about mental health and suicide prevention
- Advocating for public policies in mental health and suicide prevention
- Supporting survivors of suicide loss and those affected by suicide in our mission

Led by CEO Robert Gebbia and headquartered in New York, and with a public policy office in Washington, D.C., AFSP has local chapters in all 50 states and Puerto Rico, with programs and events held throughout the year. Learn more about AFSP in its latest [Annual Report](#), and join the conversation on suicide prevention by following AFSP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [YouTube](#).

AFSP has set a bold goal to reduce the annual suicide rate 20% by 2025. [Read more about Project 2025.](#)

Where does the money go?

83 Cents of every donor dollar directly supports our four focus areas:

Research, Advocacy, Education, and Support.

AFSP has an "A" rating from Charity Watch and top rating of four stars from Charity Navigator

Learn more about [our work](#).

Download our [Elevator Pitch](#) to help share where the money can go and how every dollar counts.



Getting Started

First Order of Business – Make It Personal

To get people inspired to join your team—or to make a donation—it’s important that you customize your online pages. Log in to your DonorDrive portal and create the following:

- Team and Personal Fundraising Pages
- Personal testimonial video to inspire others to register and donate
- Customizable fundraising emails and letters

Your Team Page will be the first thing others see about the walk – let them know why this cause is so important. [Log in to your DonorDrive fundraiser portal](#) (or click “Dashboard” if you’re already logged in), then click “Your Fundraising” or “Your Team Fundraising” to manage and edit your page.

This can also all be done through the app!

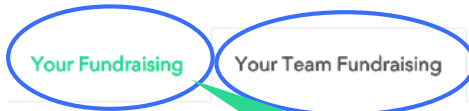


HOME ABOUT GET INVOLVED MAKE AN IMPACT REGISTER WALKER CENTRAL

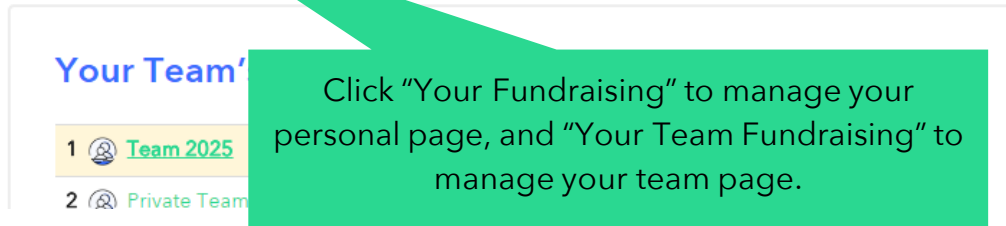
SAMPLE OUT OF THE DARKNESS WALK

Your Events ▾

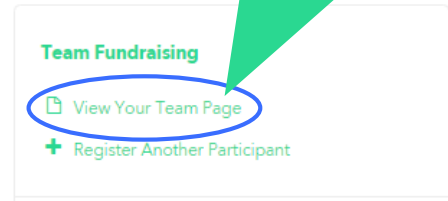
09/07/2024 / Team: [Team 2025](#) Captain: you



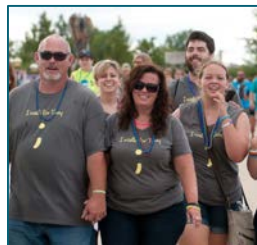
Click here to edit your pages



Click “Your Fundraising” to manage your personal page, and “Your Team Fundraising” to manage your team page.



[View DonorDrive Tutorials HERE.](#)



Recruitment

Invite People to Join Your Team

Chances are, everyone you know is somehow connected to AFSP's mission. As Team Captain, you have the ability to unite people who have lost a loved one to suicide, are concerned about someone who may be struggling, have struggled personally or made an attempt, or who simply supports you and the cause.

Now that your fundraising pages have been personalized, it's time to invite people to join your team. **The most successful teams recruit 5 or more members!** Think about who you'd like to ask – starting with your family, friends, and colleagues. You may be surprised to learn how many people would love the opportunity to get involved.

You can send invitations through the email tool in your DonorDrive portal (see image below), by sharing the link to your team page through your personal email or social pages (click **"edit your team page"** to view your team page link), or through the app. Recruitment will help you reach your team's fundraising goal, but also spread the word and raise awareness about suicide prevention.

You can also add people directly to your team by clicking **"Register Another Participant"** from **Your Team Fundraising**. **Be sure to include their email address so they receive your team emails as well as important event updates AND emails to redeem Walk gifts if they qualify!**

The screenshot shows the DonorDrive portal interface. At the top, there are two tabs: "Your Fundraising" and "Your Team Fundraising", with the latter circled in green. Below the tabs is a main content area with a header "Invite Friends to Join your Team" and a sub-header "Get your team started by inviting your friends!". A blue button labeled "INVITE YOUR FRIENDS" is highlighted with a red arrow pointing to it from the right. To the right of the main content area is a sidebar with several sections: "Team Fundraising" containing "View Your Team Page" and "Register Another Participant" (circled in green); "Ask Friends to Donate" with social media icons; "Your Team" containing "Send a Message to Your Team", "View Your Team", and "Invite Someone to Join Your Team" (circled in green); and "Event Information".

Please note: If you set your team up to be "invite only," the only way someone can register for your team is by clicking the link in the invitation you email through DonorDrive; otherwise, your team page will not have a "join this team" button nor will it appear on the list of available teams during the registration process. If you checked this box in error, you can uncheck it by clicking "edit your team page" and unchecking the "allow only people I invite to join my team" box in the Team Page Information section



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OUT OF THE
DARKNESS

Recruitment

Finding People Who Share Your Passion

After you start your team with your friends and family consider connecting with these members of your community to grow your team:

Co-workers

Since funds raised by an Out of the Darkness Community Walk benefit that local community, it is always a good idea to reach out to your coworkers. Many people want to give back to their community and the Out of the Darkness Walks may be the perfect philanthropy for them.

Many companies are also willing to sponsor a team walking in the event because they want to invest in causes their employees care about. Talk to your HR department and see if your company would be willing to sponsor a team in the event or if they offer [matching gifts!](#)

Local Social or Volunteer Groups

If you are involved with local volunteer or social groups encourage others around you to be part of your team. Many people aren't involved in an Out of the Darkness Community Walk because they don't know it is happening or that a walk for suicide prevention even exists. Be a spokesperson for the cause, and include others in AFSP's mission.

Ask a Local AFSP Staff or Chapter Member to Speak

Do you have a larger audience that may be interested in hearing about the walk and AFSP? Reach out to your walk chair or your [Local AFSP Chapter](#) and see if they would be willing to talk about what AFSP is doing in the community and how to be involved.

Tips for Success:



Host a Team Kickoff

In-person or virtual team kickoffs are the best: host a small wine and cheese party, a potluck Sunday lunch, a sports themed get-together or any other fun idea to bring everyone together.

**Make sure you have a way to show your fundraising website online and are able to walk through the Fundraiser Portal.*



Post Away

Of course sharing on social and through text and email is always the best place to start and remind everyone, but have you thought about flyers, too? Display event flyers on your desk, in the school or company lounge, lunchroom, fitness center, lobby, elevators, cafeteria and/or stairwell. Ask local coffee shops, libraries, and bookstores for permission to post on their bulletin boards.

Flyers can be found in the [Participant Hub](#)



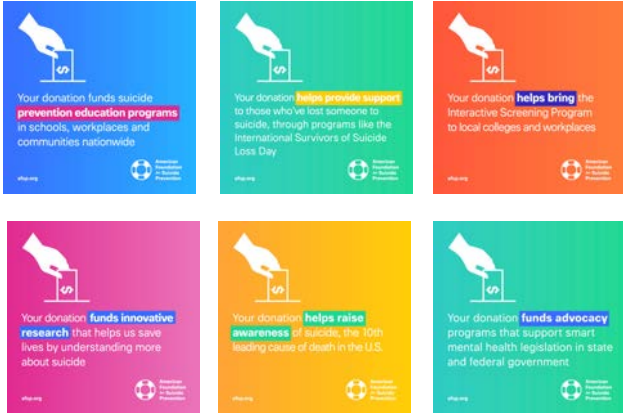
Share Why You Walk

Never be afraid to share your personal story. More people than you realize have been touched by suicide and your strength in sharing your reason for walking may be all it takes for them to open up.

If possible, visit and ask each potential walker to join your team in person. People respond best when asked personally.

Fundraising

Every Donation Makes a Difference



Start With a Plan

As Team Captain, you have an opportunity to create a **customized fundraising plan** specific to your team. It all starts with a **goal**, which determines how many walkers you need, and how much each person needs to raise. It is important to provide clear expectations to your Teammates, but also support, motivate and serve as their ultimate cheerleader during the campaign! Show them that fundraising can be FUN! Plus, if they reach their goals, you in turn will reach your overall team goal!

Set the Stage for Successful Fundraising

Set clear and meaningful team, and individual walker goals –what amount are you and your Teammates trying to raise?

- Send every team member the [Fundraising Toolkit](#)
- Help your Teammates individually make a list of who they should ask for support
- Who will not say NO to them... make sure those people are on their list!
- Brainstorm at least one group fundraising activity for your entire team
- Create a [custom team shirt](#) that will raise funds for your team!
- Seek approval to host a dress down day at work in exchange for donations to your team!

Tips for Keeping Your Team on Track

- Always remember your “WHY.” Why are you walking? Why is this cause important?
- Provide info on suicide prevention research and programs from afsp.org or from the local chapter.
- Make sure everyone knows the **impact** they can have, and to share.
- Point out that individuals have to raise \$150—not teams—to earn the official Out of the Darkness Walk shirt.
- **Encourage everyone to raise a minimum of \$150. Let them know that AFSP offers fundraising incentives at multiple levels.**
- Lead by example by making a self-donation. This will inspire others to do the same!
- Create some friendly competition by recognizing team members for things like: most funds raised, best recruiter or greatest team spirit.

Fundraising

Team Fundraiser Ideas

Corporate Matching Gift – Ask your company to match the amount of pledges you receive from your co-workers.

Garage Sale – Spring and Fall are great times to clean out all those unwanted items and host a garage sale for your Walk team.

Bake Sale - Host a bake sale with your friends or at your child's school.

Alumni Organizations – Ask your own college or university to make a donation or place an ad in their alumni newsletter about your philanthropic efforts.

Keep the Change – Turn your small change into additional dollars for your fundraising efforts.

Office Fundraising Challenge – Challenge your office colleagues to raise funds for your team. Hand out homemade fundraising envelopes and provide an award or incentive to the top fundraiser.

Return Address Labels or Email Signature – Print return address labels for your outgoing mail or add a tagline to your personal email with *“I’m Walking to Prevent Suicide: Join or Donate Today”* and include your team link.

Business Support – Ask local restaurants or other local businesses to place a money jar at the front of their establishment or if they'd be willing to host a fundraising event to benefit your team.

Bulletin at Religious and Community Institutions – Post a flyer, and/or submit an announcement in the newsletter to let everyone know about the Walk and invite them to join your team!

Birthday for a Cause – Instead of gifts have your friends and family write a check to AFSP on your behalf.

The Bill Collectors – Ask your doctor, dentist, insurance agents, hair stylist, etc to write a check for you instead of the other way around!

Gym – Ask your gym to place a pledge jar at the front desk! Leave a stack of donation forms at the counter as well.

Neighborly Love – Stick a flyer in their mailboxes or post to your online neighborhood board (such as Nextdoor) explaining why you're raising money and ask them to donate.

Karaoke Night – Host a Karaoke night at your local bar and have people give donations to sing.

PTO Days – Ask your HR Dept. if you can donate your PTO time to your fundraising efforts – and consider providing a company match!

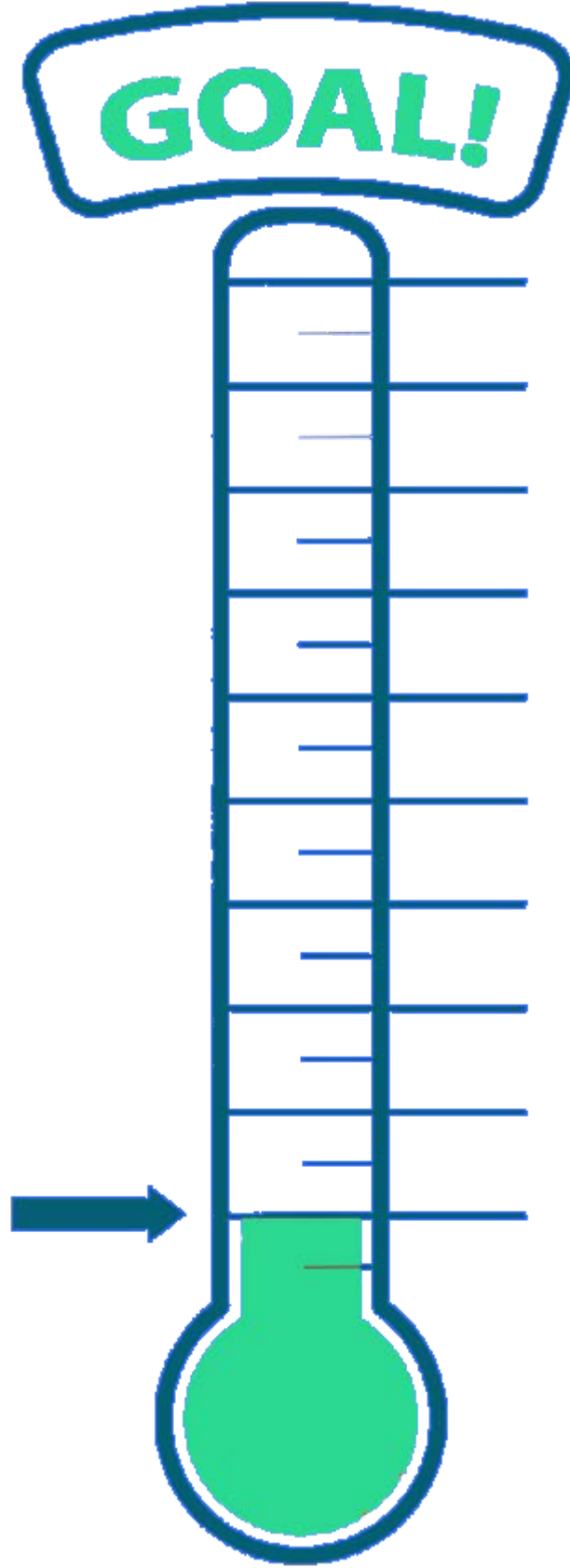
Curse Jar – Always a favorite! Place a curse jar in the office and whenever someone says a bad word they have to open up their wallet, grab a dollar and put it in the jar.

Find more tips and tools in [Team Central](#) and [Participant Hub](#)



Fundraising

Use the thermometer to track your team's progress



Recruitment & Fundraising

Recruitment Checklist

- I have set my team recruitment goal (if I am a returning team captain, my goal is at least 20% higher than my previous year's team size).
- I have a team committee to assist me in organizing and motivating my team.
- If I have a corporate team, I have secured support from my company's top executives.
- I have set a date for our kickoff event and asked a chapter volunteer to send a representative to my event, or I have asked for AFSP materials to distribute at my event.
- I have publicized my team through posters, newsletters, social media and word of mouth.
- I have personalized my email signature to let others know I am walking and recruiting team members.
- I have made a list of possible team members and personally asked each individual to join my team.
- I have encouraged every team member to recruit at least one new team member to join our team.



Fundraising Checklist

- I have set a team goal and have informed all of my team members of our team fundraising goal.
- I have personalized my personal and team webpage with a picture and short story of why we participate.
- I have familiarized myself with the fundraising resources available in Team Central and the Participant Hub.
- I have sent every team member the [Fundraising Toolkit](#).
- I have asked my company or organization to make a donation to our team.
- I have asked my team members and donors if their companies have a matching gift program. If so, I have encouraged them to ask their coworkers to donate to them and request matching funds.
- I have planned at least one fundraising event for my team (e.g. bake sale, car wash, etc.).
- I have told everyone on my team the date of our fundraising event and delegated responsibilities to them.
- I have asked each team member to kick-start their fundraising by making a self donation.
- I have asked each team member to update their personal fundraising page and send 5 emails to potential donors.



Out of the Darkness Walk

Get Ready to Walk

The Out of the Darkness Community Walks are an opportunity to share stories and memories – to heal and provide hope for the future. We will always remember those we lost, celebrate those who are still with us, and thank all those who helped us continue to provide encouragement and support. This is a community cause, and the best way to celebrate your team's success is through meaningful recognition, and walking together at an Out of the Darkness Community Walk!

In preparation for the big event:

- Say THANK YOU to your Teammates!
- Highlight your team's wins throughout the campaign across social media.
- Recognize your donors by saying thank you privately, or publicly
- Personal are especially meaningful
- Send thank you emails from your DonorDrive Fundraising Portal
- Use #OutoftheDarkness to tag your team photos in social media
- Watch for an email a few days before your walk with event-day details, fun facts and important information about your Out of the Darkness Community Walk
- Be sure to check-in at the walk for t-shirts and to turn in any checks, then visit the resource tables, take part in the activities, hug a loved one, and be proud of your hard work in leading the fight to stop suicide.



Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do I have to send in my donations? Can I bring them with me to the Walk?

A: While you can always bring your donations to the Walk, it is preferable that you mail them in prior to Walk day:

AFSP, ATTN: Out of the Darkness Walks, 199 Water Street, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10038.

Please submit the [offline donation forms](#) with corresponding checks to ensure proper credit.

Q: Do I have to fill out one donation form for each check?

A: Yes. This is the best way to ensure you receive credit for all your fundraising efforts.

Q: What if people want to give me cash?

A: It is safest and best for record-keeping that you convert all cash received to checks or money orders. If you're able, send a personal check covering the full amount, along with the corresponding donation forms, to AFSP. We will credit your friends and family for their generosity. If this is not possible, you can always bring the cash donations and appropriate donation forms to the Walk.

Q: What if my donors don't want to donate online?

A: You can always have your donors mail their donations directly to our New York address above. Please have them submit the corresponding donation forms with their checks so you will be credited for your fundraising efforts.

Q: Will the money turned in before the Walk, at the Walk, and after the Walk show up on my page and my donation report? How long will it take?

A: Absolutely. If the corresponding donation forms were filled out and submitted along with your donations, then you should see your fundraising efforts reflected on your page within four weeks.

Q: What happens if it rains on the day of the Walk?

A: All Walks will be held on the date scheduled "rain or shine", **BUT** check your email and your Walk event page for any updates/changes. Walks will be postponed to a later date if the conditions are too dangerous or the location has announced that the Walk cannot take place.

Q: Who should checks be made payable to?

A: Please ask your supporters to make checks payable to AFSP.

Q: Is there a fee to participate?

A: While there is no registration fee or fundraising minimum in order to participate, all participants are encouraged to fundraise a minimum of \$150.

[Click here to view a complete list of Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#)



Resources

Know the Facts

Undoubtedly you will receive some questions about the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, the walk itself, or general inquiries about suicide and mental health conditions. You should always be prepared with some information to share with those around you.

Helpful Links:

- [About the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention \(AFSP\)](#)
- [Suicide Facts & Figures](#)
- [AFSP Financial Information](#)
- [AFSP Annual Report](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions – Event Basics and General Information](#)
- [AFSP Chapters](#)
- [AFSP's Work](#)
- [Find Support](#)

Shareables & Videos

Graphics and videos are helpful for sharing information in an easy, visual way

[AFSP Social Shareables](#) – social graphics created by AFSP

[State Fact Sheets](#) – Click to find and download a PDF of your state's fact sheet

[Honor Beads](#) - We often use honor beads to show our personal connection to the cause and help us identify others who understand our experience

[#RealConvo](#) –share graphics and help educate others on how to have a #RealConvo

[Videos](#) - Share videos from AFSP's YouTube page and the Research videos throughout the Walk season

More graphics and flyers can be found in the [Participant Hub](#)





American
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THANK YOU
for Walking With Us.

Questions?

Contact your local Walk Chair (listed on event page),
Local Chapter, or walks@afsp.org