



Survivor Guidebook

A one stop shop for recruitment, engagement, and more!

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Introduction

Survivors are some of our Relay For Life events' most valuable players. They are the heart of the Relay movement. The Relay event is a special time when communities can celebrate these amazing individuals. This guidebook is your one-stop shop for everything related to survivors at Relay. You'll notice three main sections: recruitment, engagement, and experience. In the recruitment section, we'll talk about getting survivors to your event. Engagement is about how you're elevating a survivors' participation in Relay and keeping them close to the American Cancer Society. And finally, experience will touch on your Relay day and how to provide an exceptional experience for survivors to keep them coming back year after year.

What's new?

- We've taken existing information from three separate guidebooks and combined them into one convenient resource
- We've added some new best practices from Relays across the country
- We've broken survivorship down into three sections; recruitment, engagement, and experience
- By utilizing this guidebook, you will be able to;
 - Make survivors feel special
 - Provide ways for survivors to learn more about the American Cancer Society
 - Provide fun, easy, and cost-effective ways to improve the quality of every event
 - Provide an excellent experience for survivors at Relay events
 - Set a foundation to grow survivor participation
 - Keep survivors at Relay longer

Recruitment

The Objective:

- Recruit survivors through a systems approach.
- Increase the number of survivors on teams and event leadership teams.
- Increase the number of survivors participating in events.

The Rationale

Recruiting survivors is essential to the growth and success of every Relay For Life event.

- The number of survivors participating in Relay has trended down for the past few years.
- Each additional survivor (above the event's average) attending a Relay event equates to approximately \$209 in additional revenue (VoX data). The same is true for a decline in an event's survivor numbers – conservatively equating to \$209 in lost revenue per survivor.
- Our research shows that teams with survivors on them raise \$1,800 more than teams without survivors.

Survivor Recruitment Strategy

1. Recruit a survivor/caregiver lead.

- Recruit sub-leadership team members who are passionate about recruiting survivors and who may have a personal story that is relatable to survivors and caregivers.
- Sub-leadership team members should be focused on creating a meaningful experience for our survivors throughout the entire Relay season.

2. Build a survivor/caregiver recruitment plan.

Have you ever been asked to KISS? Keep It Super Simple! Follow these four steps and you'll have more survivors at your Relay next year. Creating your plan is the easy part – sticking to it can be tough. Work as a team to stick with your plan all year long and you'll see great results.

Step 1: Make a list of places to find survivors and caregivers in your community who are not currently involved in your event that could be (see the list of ideas on the following page).

Step 2: Assign a volunteer to make the initial approach, schedule a visit for the survivor/caregiver lead, or make a presentation. Be sure to share meaningful and personal stories that demonstrate the emotional impact and importance of their involvement.

Step 3: Set a date to follow up.

Step 4: Determine next steps.

3. Activate survivor/caregiver recruitment.

- Prioritize recruitment prospects.
- Incorporate community presentations and recruitment blitzing into your recruitment plan.

Survivor/Caregiver Recruitment Tips

These are suggested ideas or actions that you may find helpful when recruiting survivors and caregivers in your community. It's all about knowing your community to recruit survivors and caregivers. Most often, we recruit caregivers when recruiting survivors. Remember to utilize your Relay leadership team, key leaders in your community, and Relay teams for a more successful recruitment.

- Mail a survivor invitation to survivors in your area. Did you know that staff can get a "BOB" report and find a list of local survivors? Customize a local survivor invitation using the artwork builder on Brand Toolkit and invitations can be sent to all local survivors.
- Look for natural partners to make presentations/recruit survivors/caregivers: support groups, churches, doctor's office, civic organizations, senior centers, Wellness Center (YMCA), etc.
- Staff can search the Cancer Resource Connection (on societysource) to find support groups in your area. Reach out to see if you can present at an appropriate meeting. BONUS TIP: Use your entire volunteer network to help here. Try to bring someone who represents that group. For example, if it's a breast cancer support group bring a breast cancer survivor, if it's a male support group try to bring a male cancer survivor.
- Think out of box and remember to look for non-natural partner opportunities such as book clubs, parenting groups, running clubs, coffee clubs, etc.
- Church bulletin inserts: Reach out to the faith-based community to insert Relay For Life and survivorship information into weekly programs.
- Leverage planned touches through holiday cards, community receptions, personal phone calls, and emails.
- Engage and encourage returning survivors to recruit new survivors by offering an incentive.
- Review the Voice of Customer results to help plan and engage your local survivors
- Often, local media will promote general event information, however consider utilizing these opportunities to highlight a local survivor and/or caregiver story.
- Don't forget to utilize your teams. Offer a team incentive for the team that brings in the most survivors. Perhaps, the newest survivors.
- Are the survivors attending your event reflective of your community? Keep diversity and inclusion in mind such as geography, race, religion, gender, age, etc.
- Create a plan for touchpoints throughout the year with prior year survivors and those who register early for the current year. Whether it's sending a birthday or Valentine's Day card, or

sending emails through your EMC to just registered survivors – keep them informed about not only the event, but the American Cancer Society as a whole.

- Work with a local hospital or health system to set up a table at a treatment center with information about the American Cancer Society and Relay For Life
- Utilize your sponsors to send survivor invitations to their customers

Specific messaging to use when speaking to survivors

- Medical treatments tackle the physical effects of cancer; Relay For Life helps heal the spirit.
- Your experience can inspire others to help the American Cancer Society and our community finish the fight. When we come together at Relay For Life, we help people with cancer today get the support and help they need while funding the next cancer breakthroughs that will help end the disease once and for all.
- Relay For Life gives you a way to publicly recognize and thank your medical team and family caregivers while coming together with others who understand.
- Relay For Life is a way to celebrate those who have battled cancer and to remember loved ones lost. It is also our chance to fight back against the disease.
- Want more tips for making the ask to survivors? Check out this tip sheet for [Telling and Selling the American Cancer Society](#)



Engagement

At that American Cancer Society, we are charged with expanding that experience for our survivors both prior to and beyond the Relay For Life event itself. Survivors know firsthand the importance of the Society's lifesaving work, and they have the unique opportunity to become ambassadors for the Society and the Relay movement by sharing their personal stories and the value of our mission.

In looking at best ways to engage survivors in the Relay For Life movement, we should embrace three laps: pre-event lap, Survivor Lap, and Caregiver Lap. The pre-event LAP is critical to lay the groundwork for overall survivor engagement and experience. Look at this acronym to help identify the best ways to accomplish this.

L: Learn about the American Cancer Society's mission. We should directly connect survivors with the mission that drives everything we do. Connect them with others in the community touched by cancer; encourage them to utilize Society programs and services; and rally those passionate about the cause to join their local Relay For Life event.

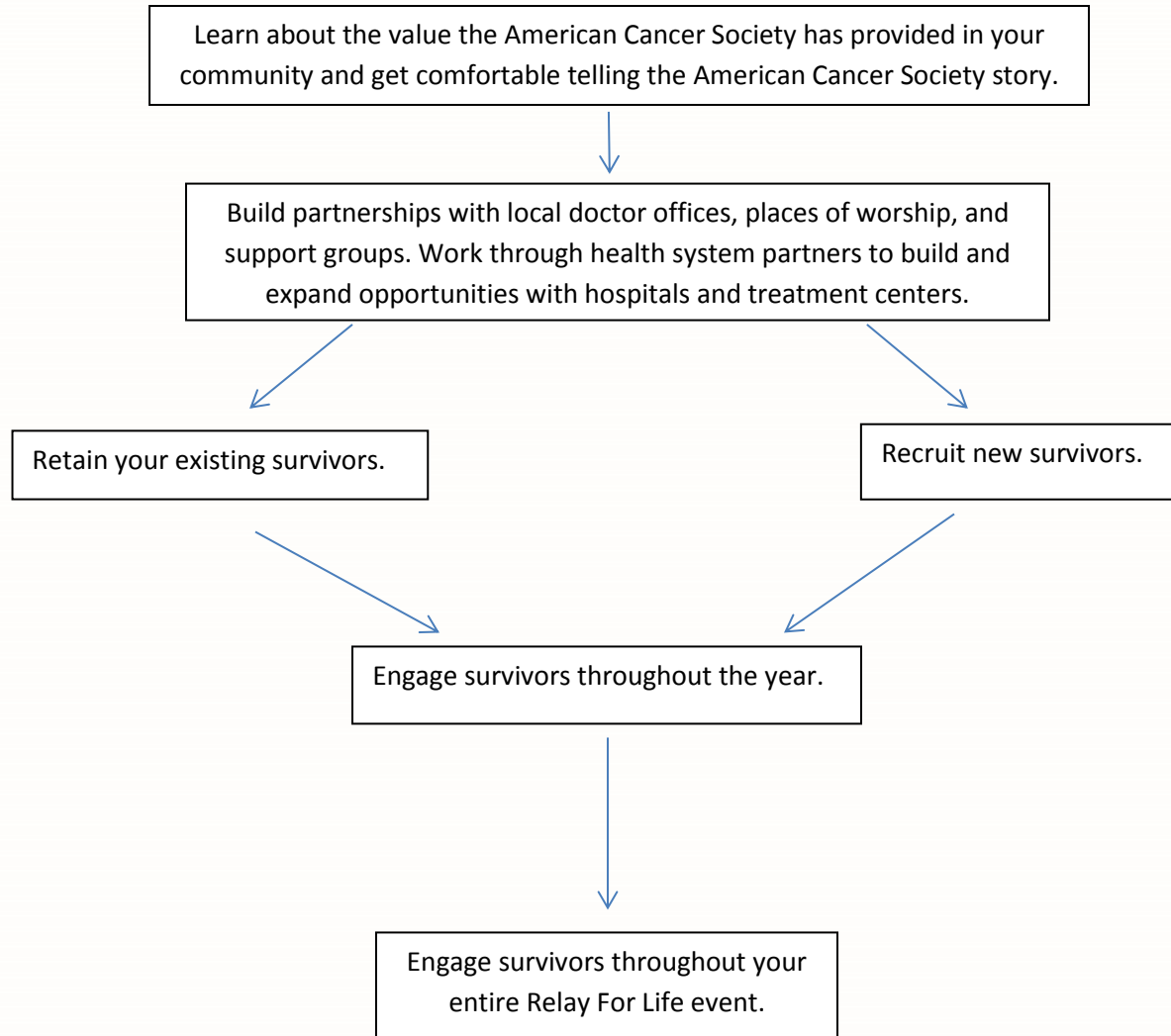
A: Amplify the American Cancer Society through the survivor's personal story. Help survivors share their personal story and its connection to the American Cancer Society and its mission.

P: Promote fighting back against cancer by fundraising on a Relay For Life team. Encourage survivors to take part by forming a Relay team or joining one to raise funds to support the Society's lifesaving mission.

Survivors want to celebrate their cancer journey both at the Relay event and throughout the year. Local events should engage survivors on Event Leadership Teams, as Team Captains, and as part of the planning process. Though the Survivorship Lead may take the lead with this effort, survivorship engagement is such an important part of the Relay experience that it should be part of all that we do.

For every Event Leadership Team member, the key to success when focusing on survivor engagement is to remember that for survivors, their involvement with our Relay events is much more than a lap. Their Relay For Life experience is really about fighting back, and we should continuously seek opportunities to connect survivors in various ways to do that. For some, fighting back may mean attending a survivor reception; while for others, it may mean joining the Event Leadership Team. It's important that we provide an opportunity for every way someone may want to support the cause.

Roadmap to Success



Read the flowchart starting at the bottom. We can only effectively engage survivors throughout the Relay event if we have engaged them throughout the year. We can only engage survivors throughout the year if we put energy toward recruiting and retaining them. We can only recruit and retain survivors if we build various partnerships at the local level. We can only build partnerships when everyone sees the value of the American Cancer Society and its mission. Most importantly, people cannot see the Society's value without those in the community sharing their American Cancer Society story and connecting it back to the Society's mission to save lives.

Survivor Engagement Before the Event

Here are a few things you could do to bring your survivors and caregivers together

- **September:** Hold an informal focus group to discuss what activities would be enjoyed by most and would be easy to conduct for survivors and caregivers.
- **October:** Gather everyone at a local orchard and go apple picking, or, host a potluck encouraging people to bring healthy side dishes and snacks. Take the opportunity to discuss or hand out information about the importance of good nutrition during and after cancer treatment and ways that active caregivers can keep themselves healthy. Consider having an expert speaker from our health systems team available to talk about nutrition and answer questions.
- **November:** Arrange for a local theater to donate the use of one of their screens and host a movie night. Bring a Relay or educational video to show as a preview to the movie. Host a Thanksgiving reception.
- **December:** Hold a holiday party and have everyone bring a small stocking stuffer to put in a grab bag or ask everyone to make a small donation so gifts can be purchased for patients at the local cancer center.
- **January:** Arrange for a local indoor mini-golf or bowling alley to donate space and hold a mini tournament. Offer American Cancer Society information on exercise and techniques to decrease stress. Invite all survivors and caregivers to your Relay kickoff event. Honor them and give them the opportunity to become more involved.
- **February:** Host a survivor/caregiver Valentine's Day dinner/dance or tea.
- **March:** Invite survivors and caregivers to share their stories with others. This could be used to share at Relay events, with local media, and/or with teams and participants.
- **April:** Hold a pre-Relay survivor social so survivors can learn what will be offered at Relay and what they can expect when they arrive. (Review event logistics, activity schedule, reception, etc.) Make sure they know about the American Cancer Society's Cancer Action Network and/or share the latest research the American Cancer Society is funding to help end the disease.
- **May:** Arrange a gathering at a local park or the town green and lead a 30-minute walk followed by a healthy snack.
- **June:** Host a picnic at a local park.
- **July:** Gather survivors and ask them to write thank-you notes to all Relay sponsors and/or Team Captains. This will also provide an opportunity to collect event evaluations and solicit feedback.
- **August:** Invite survivors and caregivers to a local outdoor concert or picnic in the park event. Make it a potluck or have a local restaurant or supermarket donate food.

Survivor Engagement at the Event

Consider these ideas to help as you brainstorm all of the possible ways to engage survivors in the Relay event itself. We'll dive deeper into the survivor lap, survivor dinner, and additional activities for survivors in the experience section of this guidebook. These activities are focused on getting survivors to stay longer, get engaged with the ELT, and engage with team captains at the event.

- **Host an ELT meeting in the survivor tent:** After your survivor dinner, host an informal “Next Year Committee Interest Meeting” in your survivor tent. Invite survivors and caregivers to stay for that meeting so they can hear about the opportunities to get involved in the event next year. This is a great way to engage people while they are still at the event. If they are having a great experience, they’re more likely to become more engaged.
- **Survivor Judges:** This is an idea to make sure survivors see the entire event and not just the inside of the survivor tent. Ask survivors to judge contests at the event such as best campsite, best team banner, judge a contest on the field, or more. This gets them interacting with teams and see how passionate and involved our teams are!
- **Adopt-a-Survivor Program:** Oftentimes a survivor may come to the Relay event and only walk the Survivor Lap, not participating in the event afterward. We know they are missing out on seeing how amazing the rest of the event is, so encourage teams involved with the event to adopt one, two, or three survivors for the night so they can all have a richer Relay experience. Hanging out with a team will allow survivors to participant in special laps, onsite fundraising, and other entertainment and activities. Survivors can join teams at their campsites to get the “team experience” even if they don’t have a team of their own.
- **One Step - One Year – One Dollar -** A number of Relays across the country have tried a new way to engage and empower survivors under the survivor tent. The survivor chair encouraged survivors to buy “Relay Feet” for each year of their survivorship. After survivors buy their “feet” they place them along the track – this shows how many years of survivorship your event has! You can also encourage other participants to buy feet to help go all the way around the track. [Click here for a sample script.](#)

Survivor Empowerment

What do you think about when we say Survivor Engagement? Many ELTs think about engaging survivors in the event year-round. And while that's true, we also want to think about engagement in terms of growing a survivors participation with Relay. For survivors that join for the lap only, we want grow their involvement to join on a team. For those who are on a team, perhaps they'd like to be a Team Captain or even join the ELT. We want to engage survivors as much as possible in the event, and by doing that we're **empowering** them to take on the fight against cancer.

We want to empower our survivors to support Relay For Life in the way that is ideal for them. For some, it's participating in the survivor lap only. But for others, it means joining the ELT or starting a team. And for those people, we want to give them every opportunity to feel empowered to fight back. Here are some tips for empowering your survivors.

- Give survivors extra survivor invitations so they can invite the survivors they know to Relay. Recruiting additional survivors empowers survivors!
- Let survivors know about opportunities to join your ELT. Be specific about what your ELT needs help with. Even if they are not interested, perhaps one of their caregivers would like to get more involved. Volunteering empowers survivors!
- Remind survivors how to sign up on a team or join a team. Survivors can be big motivators for team members, and can even be great fundraisers themselves. For many, fundraising is their way of fighting back. Fundraising on a team empowers survivors!
- Invite survivors to an ELT meeting as honorary guests. Get their feedback about the event and see what they'd like to get out of the event next year. You never know, they might come back to future meetings! Taking on a leadership role empowers survivors!

Experience

Our final section of the guidebook is Experience. Before moving forward, check out this great resource called [Improving Survivor Experience at Relay For Life](#). Start by clicking the link on the top of the document and watching the video. It's a great introduction to providing an exceptional customer experience for survivors.

Survivors arriving at your event

Signage

- Directional yard signs leading survivors to the event should be placed at major intersections in each direction that they may be arriving from.
- Additional yard signs clearly designating parking directions at the event site should also be present

Parking

- Be sure to block off an appropriate number of handicap parking spaces for the size of your event and the number of survivors you anticipate attending.
- If you have a big enough parking lot, block off an entire section of it for survivors only and be sure to include handicap parking spaces too.
- If there will be instances where survivors will be parking a longer distance away from the entrance, consider having a fun, decorated transportation with a designated volunteer driver who can come and pick up survivors and caregivers and bring them to the entrance.

Wheelchairs

- Secure wheelchairs for the day of the event from a hospital, retirement home, school, or other facility to use for survivors who need assistance getting into the event or making it around the track.

Greeters

- Greeters should be available at all entrances to welcome survivors and caregivers and direct them to the registration area.
- If you have volunteers who are survivors or caregivers themselves who can act as greeters that would be ideal.

Registration

- Consider if it would be best for your event to have a single registration area for all participants or if a separate area for survivors may be beneficial.
- If separate areas are determined to be beneficial for survivors, be sure to post clear signage.
- Did you know a new survivor check-in process is available to help with your customer experience? View [more details here!](#)

Survivor Tent

Careful and deliberate partnerships with other members of the ELT will ensure our special guests have refreshments, are included in activities, and mission education at the Relay event. Often survivors will come together and participate on a team that keeps them engaged in the festivities from opening until closing ceremonies. However, there are times that caregivers or survivors may show up to the event alone. See the previous section on engagement for ideas to keep them engaged at the event and get them connected to teams and the ELT.

Refreshments

- We recommend discussing the food needs with the Event Leadership Team to decide if you will be serving a light health meal or satisfying nutritional snacks.
- Whatever food is decided upon, serve it with some flair on fine china or crystal platters.

Clear Information

- Create a schedule large enough so you can see the full schedule of activities and post this around the event, not just the survivor tent.
- Create a placemat for survivors to include information about the American Cancer Society as well as an event schedule and important event information.

In-Tent Activities

Can you remember the last really fun party or event you went to? Maybe you laughed, danced, acted silly, or even met someone new? The next section includes a few simple suggestions to get survivors and caregivers involved in activities within the survivor area.

- Create an inviting space
 - Chairs and tables
 - Lights
 - Tablecloths
 - Simple Centerpieces
 - Clean Tent
 - Recliners or sofas
 - Streamers, tulle, and balloons
 - Sides on tent (depending on your climate)
 - Pampering, such as giveaways or massages.

Mission Messaging Materials

- Ask volunteers within the survivor and caregiver tent talking about some of our programs and services. Invite the audience to become a program volunteer with the American Cancer Society.
- Set up an American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN) café.
- Invite a doctor or researcher to share information about cancer advancements.
- Invite a nutritionist to share information about healthy eating habits.
- Invite a personal trainer to share information about the benefits of physical activity.

Additional Survivor Activities

Super-star Survivors

Draw purple stars on the tags of three to five survivor T-shirts before arriving at the event. Select random sizes and those people will be your contest judges if they can stay for the remainder of the event.

Materials needed:

- Purple markers
- Inclusion in opening ceremony to announce the night's special judges

Thank You Note Station

Inside the survivor and caregiver tent, have a thank you note station set up for survivors to write thank you notes to their caregivers or to top teams/sponsors/participants.

Materials needed:

- Relay logo printed on clear labels
- Card stock
- Envelopes
- Markers, crayons, etc.
- Other craft supplies donated

Photo Booth

Fun backdrop and props (thought bubbles, Relay logo, and costume items) for survivors, caregivers, and others to take pictures during the event and post on social media with a hashtag provided for tagging the photos.

Materials needed:

- Backdrop on the Brand Toolkit, or create your own
- Props
- Thought bubbles with good, positive messages "I'm here because of you", "I put the CARE in Caregiver", "I <3 my caregiver", "I <3 my survivor", "I'm a survivor", etc.
- Costume items from a party supply store, like purple boas, silly sunglasses, moustaches on sticks, etc.
- Pre-determined hashtag for social media and plenty of signage to announce the photo booth (and hashtag)
- A photographer (doesn't have to be professional, just someone with a camera) to capture images for those who don't have smartphones

Survivor BINGO

Make cancer survivors at your Relay event feel like celebrities! This survivor-centric version of the classic game will help participants meet new people and help survivors feel celebrated. Ask participants to turn in their completed sheets to be entered into a drawing.

Target: Survivors

Timing: Event

Materials needed:

- BINGO sheets for all participants
- Flyers for Relay participants to explain the project
- Inclusion in Relay event day schedule

Time Capsule

Create a time capsule that is opened at a specified point in the Relay event. Encourage each team to bring a picture, item, etc. that is meaningful to the team. Put it in the “capsule” and bring it to the event.

Materials needed:

- Box(es) wrapped or decorated nicely
- Inclusion in a ceremony to fit in Relay event day schedule
- Fliers for Relay participants to explain the project, what they need to bring and maybe a questionnaire about the item

Additional Resources

- [Survivor Speaker How-to Guide](#)
- [RFL Survivor Lap Release](#)
- [RFL Survivor Story Release](#)
- [RFL Survivor Celebration News Release - Spanish](#)
- [CAC Virtual Survivor Program Flyer](#)
- *add refreshed items (payroll stuffers, etc.)