



FOUNDATION BEYOND BELIEF

humanism at work

Beyond Belief Network Guides: Blood Drive

Blood drives are a great option for large teams, student groups, or any organization that can draw on a large community to fill donation appointments. Drives garner plenty of publicity, can be held almost anywhere and require minimal organization and cost. The training on how to organize and promote the event is generally provided by the blood donation agency. You can combine a blood drive with another event (e.g., picnic, Skeptic convention, etc.). Most importantly, your team is helping save lives!

Smaller groups can have members go to a [Red Cross blood donation](#) site individually during a specific time period. Larger groups could organize a drive with their local Red Cross chapter.

Eligibility ([Eligibility](#) is subject to change. Check with the site if you have any questions or concerns about eligibility.)

- Only healthy people over the age of 16 who weigh at least 110 lbs may donate.
- Since donations can only occur every 56 days, leave at least 8 weeks between blood drive events.
- The FDA prohibits blood donation agencies (including the Red Cross) from accepting blood from “men who have sex with men.” The purported rationale is to protect the general blood-receiving population from HIV. However, this is a poor criterion as it excludes a population based on perceived risk factors rather than actual risk factors. This exclusion of men who have sex with men is a controversial factor when deciding to plan a blood drive, as it may exclude and alienate members or friends of your organization. While it is ultimately up to your group to decide, it might be helpful to keep in mind that donating blood literally saves lives and that boycotting blood drives is not the best way to end FDA-mandated discrimination. For more information about advocating for against the deferral period for men who have sex with men, see our [guide](#).

Tips to Get Started

- **Preparation.** Get a rough estimate of the number of donors and a range of dates and times. Plan a few months in advance. If your team is a student team, you will need to work with your school, too. Ask a couple people to help organize. As many members as possible should help advertise and recruit donors.
- **Location.** Contact the [Red Cross](#) or [America's Blood Center](#) for help organizing your blood drive. You can call the Red Cross (1-800-GIVE-LIFE) or America's Blood Centers (1-888-USBLOOD). You'll also have to find a suitable location. Parking, restrooms, temperature control, and size are all factors to consider.
- **Volunteers.** Designate someone to be in charge of the donation calendar and schedule appointments. Recruit a handful (4-12) of volunteers who can help out the day of the drive to help post signs, call no-show appointments, run the canteen, and do whatever else might be needed. Plan on reminding people of their appointments a day or so before the drive.
- **Bleed & Feed.** If your team is too busy to organize your own blood drive, consider gathering eligible volunteers to take your local Red Cross or America's Blood Center. For those unable to donate, they can help with transportation and moral support. Once the eligible volunteers have donated, go to a favorite eatery to help them replenish their energy.

On Blood Drive day

- Early in the morning, block off parking spots for donation agency.
- Post directional signs at every entrance, crossroad, etc.
- Set up tables and chairs for the sign-in.
- Contact no-shows and ask them to reschedule if possible.
- Remind donors to take it easy and stay hydrated for the rest of the day.
- Thank everyone who donates, volunteers, or coordinates.

After the Drive

- Add up total units donated, members involved, total donors, etc.
- Publicize your success and plan your next blood drive, making sure to make note of areas for improvement or expansion.
- Start planning for another event in 8 to 12 weeks when these participants will be eligible to donate again.

Don't forget to [submit an event report](#).

Questions or Concerns?

If you need help with planning your event or have additional questions, the best way to contact Foundation Beyond Belief is to use the [contact webform](#), which enables us to track the resolution of your question.