



Walk to School Day: “Step-by-Step”

Walk to School Day promotes physical activity in communities. According to the [National Center for Safe Routes to School](#), Walk to School Day has become part of a movement for year-round safe routes to school. The [Healthy for Life Project](#) encourages you to try a Walk (or Bike!) to School Day at your school or throughout your district.

Among other schools in Fairfield County, CT, Fox Run Elementary School in Norwalk held its own Walk to School Day events for several years. The information below outlines Fox Run’s strategy. Customize these steps to fit the needs of your school or district. Start small or go big, just get moving!

You can also find great tips and resources—planning guides, talking points, sample press releases, and more—at www.walkbiketoschool.org.

Planning a Walk to School Day Event

Step 1: Contact your principal and PTO

- At Fox Run, the first step was contacting our principal and PTO to gauge interest, check for potential scheduling conflicts, and clear the details with school officials.

Step 2: Communicate to families and teachers

- The PTO reached out to families and provided details at meetings, newsletters, and online. The principal promoted the event to teachers.

Step 3: Identify departure points

- Many children live too far from school or don’t have sidewalks between their homes and school, so Fox Run identified two starting points where chaperones would be stationed. Parents could drop their children off at these locations or park their cars and walk with

the group. Ideally, choose locations with parking and a walkable route to the school (Step 5). Examples:

- Golf Courses
- Parks
- Churches
- Businesses that are not busy in the morning
- Fox Run contacted these organizations and asked permission to use the locations as a departure site on Walk to School Day, and possibly for future walking days.

Step 4: Recruit volunteers

- Sacred Heart University Exercise Science students helped with the event.
 - Before the event, they conducted walkability assessments of the walking routes from drop off points to the school.
 - During the event, they attended and served as chaperones.

Step 5: Map and assess walking routes

- Sacred Heart University students and faculty assessed the walking routes to make sure they were feasible and safe and then planned the routes accordingly. You can use a [formal walkability audit like this one from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) or simply apply common sense to assess the selected route. A few things to look out for:
 - Sidewalks
 - Are they continuous or fragmented?
 - What is their general condition?
 - Are there any obstacles to remove in advance, such as tree branches?
 - Intersections
 - Are they high-traffic or high-speed intersections? Be sure to do your assessment at the same time the Walk to School Day will be held.
 - Do you need assistance from a crossing guard or law enforcement official?
 - Distance
 - Approximately 1 mile or less is appropriate, given time constraints and age/ability ranges among children.

Step 6: Notify city officials and other parties, if applicable

- Mayor's Office, law enforcement, crossing guards, Health Department, etc.
 - Norwalk's mayor has attended the event
 - The city provided a crossing guard and/or police officers to help ensure safety
 - The Health Department attended and helped promote the event

Step 7: Spread the word!

- The PTO at Fox Run contacted our local television news (News12), and the Health Department helped promote the event to other local reporters. You can reach out to your local media outlets (TV, radio, newspapers, online news). Ask them to attend, and/or take photos and send them out with a description after the event.

- Find great templates and tools for reaching the press at <http://www.walkbiketoschool.org/plan/get-media-attention/>.

Step 8: Assess your event

- It is important to measure the impact of events like this one, so you can improve and expand in the future. Record how many people participated, how satisfied they were with the event, and whether this event might encourage them to be more active in the future. Contact the [Healthy for Life Project](#) to see the survey it used to measure the impact of its Walk to School Day Events.
- **We are very interested in learning your findings! Please share!**

Step 9: Have Fun!

Step 10: Plan more Walk to School events!

If your goal is to get your students more active, make Walk to School Day a regular school activity. Perhaps a few teachers or parents could take this on as a monthly activity. Once you have mapped the route and identified your drop off points, you can hold a walk to school day anytime!

For more information or assistance holding a Walk to School Event at your school, please contact us!

Healthy for Life Project

Eat Well + Move More = Live Better

The Healthy for Life Project is working to make your community a healthier place to live, work, learn, and play. We are a coalition of organizations, agencies, and community members from the Greater Norwalk, CT area. Our Project originated from a 2012 community health assessment and improvement plan conducted by Norwalk Hospital and Norwalk Health Department. Our mission is to reduce and prevent obesity and chronic disease by promoting healthy lifestyles in our communities, and our goals are simple: Help people of all ages Eat Well and Move More! To learn more, visit www.healthyforlifeproject.org.

