

Out of the Darkness Community Walk Team Leader Guide



Out of the
DARKNESSSM
COMMUNITY WALKS
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention

Thank You for Being Part of the Out of the Darkness Community Walks

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 over 300 walks will be taking place across the country. Each of these walks will connect a local community of suicide survivors with the community at large. Together we will open the national dialogue surrounding suicide and let others know that they are not alone. Together we will give a voice to those that are too stifled by stigma to speak up on their own. Together we will fund research, support groups, and educational tools that will truly make suicide prevention something tangible.

Why do the Out of the Darkness Community Walks make such a difference? Up to 50% of the funds raised by each Out of the Darkness Community Walk will stay with the local communities, while the remaining 50% will fund national research, advocacy, and development of new education and survivor programs. These are the essential funds that put educational materials in schools, make our political leaders aware of the need for change, and let survivors know that they are not alone.

Consider this:

- Since the fall of 2012, all 10 of the University of California schools are using AFSP's [Interactive Screening Program \(ISP\)](#).
- All public schools in Alabama have AFSP's [More Than Sad](#) series and supplements available as a training tool.
- AFSP has funded more than 400 [research](#) studies that have been used to help improve understanding of the biological, genetic, and behavioral factors that can lead to suicide.
- The 15th annual [International Survivors of Suicide Day](#) conference took place on 6 continents, bringing tens of thousands of survivors together in countries as diverse as Australia, Guatemala, Taiwan and South Africa for support.

All of these programs, and many more, are mainly funded by the Out of the Darkness Community Walks. That is why the role of Team Captains is so important. As a Team Captain, supporting your team will allow not only the Out of the Darkness Community Walks to grow but also allow AFSP to continue the important work it is doing to inform the public about suicide, offer resources to at-risk populations, and provide support for survivors.

Thank you for being a Team Captain and for taking your first steps to bring suicide Out of the Darkness.

Our Sincere Thanks,

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

Background on the Out of the Darkness (OOTD) Community Walks



The Out of the Darkness Community Walks were created by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) in 2004 with the vision of uniting individuals that have been affected by suicide and mental disorders. The local Community Walks were designed to address the isolation felt by many survivors and connect them with other survivors and supporters in their own community. During the first Out of the Darkness Community Walk season events took place in 24 locations across the country and the walks raised almost \$850,000.

Since the first walk season in 2004, the Out of the Darkness Community Walks have continued to grow. In 2013, Community Walks took place in nearly 300 locations across the United States and raised over \$9.3 million! Since 2004, the Out of the Darkness Community Walks have raised more than \$26.5 million for AFSP and have connected hundreds of thousands of participants nationwide.

Where to Begin

By now you should have already registered for your local Out of the Darkness Community walk. If you have not there are several ways to be involved:

- **Team Captain** – Whether you are walking for the cause or in honor of a loved one this is the best way to get everyone together under the same banner. Create a team, email team members, fundraise together, and walk together the day of the event. Team Captains are essential to getting the word out about the walk and bringing suicide Out of the Darkness.
- **Team member** – Not ready to lead a team yet? Not a problem! If someone else is willing to be the Team Captain you can always register as a team member. This can be done by selecting “Join a Team” during the registration process.
- **Individual Walker** – Although no one ever walks alone, you can always register to walk as an individual and meet other members of the community the day of the walk.
- **Virtual Walker** – Can’t make the walk this year, but still want to help? Register for the event and you will still receive a fundraising page. Use this page to continue to help AFSP even if you cannot walk in the event this year.

If you registered as an Individual Walker, but would now like to join or create a team please contact us at 888-333-2377 or walks@afsp.org.

NOTE: This guide is written for those who have registered as TEAM CAPTAINS. If you elected not to be a Team Captain this year the remaining information may not pertain directly to you.

Why Being a Team Captain is Important

One of the most important functions of the Out of the Darkness Community Walks is to build and unite a local community of survivors. As a Team Captain you are a leader in our grassroots mission to let others know that they are not alone and that millions of others have shared the same experience as them. The only way that the stigma surrounding suicide and mental disorders can ever be broken down is with a united voice saying it's ok to get help, and the only way we can accomplish this is with your help.



Differences Between Team and Individual Walkers

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 not let stigma control us.

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, means 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 illness than hosting a local fundraising event that will not only make people talk, but also raise funds that will be making a tangible 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.

What Your DonorDrive Fundraising Page Can Do

Your [DonorDrive Fundraising Page](#) is a powerful tool that will allow you to recruit more members for your team and also reach your personal fundraising goal. Here are some of the capabilities you have through your new DonorDrive page:

- Upload a contact list from webmail and send out an email message right from your page linking to your fundraising or team page
- Make your fundraising and team pages your own with pictures, videos, and a personal message
- Post your fundraising page directly to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, or Google+
- Track your donations and send personal thank you messages to those who have donated
- Track your team's fundraising progress and how you rank amongst other teams in your Out of the Darkness Community Walk
- Import old fundraising pages and modify your current fundraising page



Getting Started

Now that you're registered as a Team Captain it's time to understand your next steps. Remember, the strength of your local AFSP and Out of the Darkness Walk community is defined mainly by the support that community receives from its captains. You are the one that is tearing down the wall that surrounds suicide and mental illness, so that those suffering can get the help they need. Never lose sight of how important your role is.

Personalize your Team Page

Your first step should be to make your Team Page your own. Add a picture and share your reason for forming the team. Why are you walking? Let others know why it is important that they join you to walk. Your Team Page will be the first thing others see about the walk – let them know why this cause is so important. If you are walking for a loved one, never be afraid to personalize your walk and give the cause a face and a name.

Invite Others

Now that your fundraising page has been personalized it's time to send your first emails. This can also be done right through the email tool in your DonorDrive page. In your email let others know why you are walking and why you want to raise awareness and funds for AFSP. Let them know you want their support on the day of the walk and let them know that the funds that they help raise will make a real change not just nationally, but right in your community.

Make a Plan and Follow-up

It is no secret that people can be forgetful and being involved with an Out of the Darkness Community Walk is no different. After you send out your initial invitation email some people will join your team, but others will not; don't take it personally and never be afraid to follow-up. Many people who want to join your walk may have simply forgotten to register after the first email and need a second as a reminder.

Spread the Word

Don't just stop at emails! Post flyers, talk to others, make a team shirt and wear it when you go out. Many walkers have connected with complete strangers just by wearing old Out of the Darkness Community Walk shirts and encouraged others to be part of the AFSP community. Many people will want to walk, and even more will want to help you even if they can't walk. Don't just stop with word of mouth interaction either. Carry business card sized slips of paper with you everywhere you go so you can let people know how they can support your fundraising campaign. Hang up flyers in your community with information about your walk. You can find these flyers online on our [Spread the Word page](#). The more prepared you are, the quicker you will see your team grow.



Recruitment – Finding Others Who Share Your Passion

The first invitations you should send should be to your friends and family. Let those around you know that you are doing the walk and that you want them to be there with you.

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

Coworkers

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 employers are also willing to sponsor a team walking in the event knowing that the funds are staying within the local community. Talk to your HR department and see if your company would be willing to sponsor a team in the event or maybe event sponsor the event itself!



Local Walking Groups

Many local communities have different walking groups that train regularly. Reach out to these groups, let them know the Walk, and invite them to walk with your team. These are active members of a walking community that may simply want to also walk for a cause. You may also be surprised how many members of the community also have a connection to suicide.

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 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.

Share Your Reason for Walking

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.

Resources

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

Use this information to guide you:

Statistics on Suicide and Mental Illness

Key Information to Know:

- In 2010 (the latest available data) over 38,000 deaths were reported in the United States.
- Nearly 1,000,000 people make a suicide attempt every year.
- 90% of people who die by suicide have a diagnosable and treatable psychiatric disorder at the time of their death.
- Suicide rates are highest for people between the ages of 45 and 64.
- Suicide is the third leading cause of death among those 15-24 years old.
- More than 80% of us will lose someone to suicide in our lifetime

Information about AFSP

Key Information to Know:

- **Mission:** The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) is the leading national not-for-profit organization exclusively dedicated to understanding and preventing suicide through research, education and advocacy, and to reaching out to people with mental disorders and those impacted by suicide.
- To fully achieve its mission, AFSP engages in the following Five Core Strategies:
 - Fund scientific research
 - Offer educational programs for professionals
 - Educate the public about mood disorders and suicide prevention
 - Promote policies and legislation that impact suicide and prevention
 - Provide programs and resources for survivors of suicide loss and people at risk, and involve them in the work of the Foundation

AFSP's Annual Report

Key Information to Know:

- AFSP has more than 60 [local chapters](#) across the country and local connections continue to be added regularly.
- AFSP's International Survivors of Suicide Day is available in 6 continents, 13 countries, and more than 300 cities. The webcast of the program is also available in English, Spanish, and French.
- AFSP is working with its chapters and the Jason Foundation on the passage of state laws to mandate suicide prevention training for high school personnel.
- Over 10,000 copies of AFSP's *More Than Sad* training program have been distributed nationwide to help educate high school students and faculty about depression and youth suicide.

Resources (Cont.)

Tax Information

Key Information to Know:

- AFSP is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, not-for-profit organization funded by private donations from individuals, foundations and corporations.
- The American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's federal tax ID number is 13-3393329.
- AFSP's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) number is 10545.



The funds you raise will help save lives. Here are just some examples of how you are making a world without suicide a possibility.

EVERY \$10: Distributes one Depression and Bipolar Awareness educational program (DVD).

EVERY \$50: Provides AFSP educational materials to 25 people. If just one person seeks help after reading these materials, a life could be saved for less than the cost of dinner and a movie.

EVERY \$100: Covers the cost of More Than Sad: Suicide Prevention and Education for Teachers and Other School Personnel (DVD and supporting program).

EVERY \$250: Enables AFSP to recruit and train a volunteer field advocate who can then educate Federal, State and local elected officials about suicide prevention.

EVERY \$500: Trains a new Survivor of Suicide support group facilitator. Each new group assists newly bereaved survivors and helps them see that they are not alone.

EVERY \$1,000: Funds a year of research into the genetic, biological or behavioral factors that contribute to suicide when added to \$1,000 from 44 other walkers. The number of lives potentially saved by this research is incalculable.

EVERY \$5,000: Places AFSP's innovative Interactive Screening Program (ISP) at a college or university to identify at risk students and get them into treatment.

Every dollar you raise will help you save a life.

Stay Connected with AFSP's Out of the Darkness Community Walks



Find us on Facebook:
[facebook.com/OOTDWalks](https://www.facebook.com/OOTDWalks)

Find us on Twitter:
twitter.com/OOTDWalks

Find us on Tumblr:
<http://outofthedarknesswalks.tumblr.com/>

We would like to extend our thanks to the Walk Committee of the Capital Region Walk for R.I.T.A. Out of the Darkness Community Walk for their input and help with the creation of this manual.

For Questions or Additional Help Recruiting

Contact us at 888-333-2377 or by email at walks@afsp.org

