

Recruiting in a

VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

NATIONAL
DIABETES
PREVENTION
PROGRAM

Ready. Set. GO!

Introduction

Virtual recruitment has become increasingly important because of emerging public health concerns and as digital technology and the Internet have become universal tools to communicate with people. This toolkit is a resource for the National Diabetes Prevention Program (National DPP) that helps CDC-recognized organizations seek guidance on how to effectively recruit program participants in a virtual or remote environment. The toolkit comprises resources, tips, and examples of organizations that have found creative ways to market their programs.

How to Use This Toolkit

Use this **Ready. Set. Go!** framework for inspiration to prepare, kickstart, and sustain your virtual recruitment strategies. If you are already doing virtual recruitment, this document can provide helpful resources and recommendations to help sustain your ongoing efforts or inspire new ideas.



Ready.

The **Ready** phase poses questions and offers considerations to ensure your organization is prepared for virtual recruitment.



Set.

The **Set** phase outlines recruitment strategies and offers criteria to help assess which ones are a good fit to meet the needs of your organization.



Go!

The **Go** phase showcases the strategies outlined in the *Set* phase and provides related examples, recommendations, and success stories.

Benefits to Virtual Recruitment

- **Expanded Reach:** Removes geographic barriers and allows increased access to a greater number of potential participants.
- **Flexibility:** Provides convenience and flexibility for potential participants to engage in the National DPP lifestyle change program.
- **Safety:** Offers safe and social distant recruitment options for both program staff and potential participants.
- **Audience Reach:** Provides an opportunity to develop and disseminate specific messages using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn, to reach the desired audiences.



Ready.

Let's start by reflecting on important questions your organization will need to consider as you prepare to recruit participants within a virtual or remote environment. The **Ready** phase presents key questions and topics that might be helpful as you prepare for virtual recruitment.

How am I delivering my program?

- **Distance Learning:** Classes are live, and participants engage with coaches and other participants through a telecommunication platform or conference call.
- **Online:** Participants log into their course sessions via a desktop computer, laptop, tablet, or smartphone.
- **In-person:** Delivered 100% in person; participants are physically present in a classroom or classroom-like setting with lifestyle coaches.
- **Combination:** A combination of any of the above delivery modes for each individual participant that is taught by trained lifestyle coaches.

For additional information on selecting a delivery platform, refer to [Delivering from a Distance: Reaching People at Home](#)

Special Considerations for Online Delivery

- Lifestyle coach interaction should be offered at least once per week during the first 6 months and once per month during the second 6 months.
- Ensure you have proper tracking systems in place to monitor participant engagement with program materials. For example, set up a watch count or viewership notification to confirm participant engagement with course material.



Do I have the fundamental skills and community connections to start virtual recruitment?

When engaging in virtual recruitment, take inventory of your organization's available staff skills and community connections. Below are skills and community connections that will help to develop and execute an effective recruitment plan.

Skills:

- **Project Management:** The ability to lead, coordinate, track, and monitor recruitment efforts.
- **Communications:** Access to recruitment channels and the ability to develop (or refresh) the right communication materials to carry out recruitment strategies.
- **Social Media Management:** The ability to manage owned social media platforms, monitor content, and regularly engage with community members through posts, replies, and an editorial calendar.

Community Connections:

- **Community Influencer:** A person(s) who amplifies your marketing and recruitment efforts by using their position and influence within the community.
- **Program Advocate:** A person(s) who promotes the program and shares their success story with potential participants. This can be a program graduate or a lifestyle coach.

How will I register participants virtually?

In the event of emerging infectious disease threats, you may need to use virtual or remote techniques to register your participants from a distance. Some options may include:

- E-mailing registration forms as fillable Word or PDF documents.
- Integrating a registration process directly into your website.
- Mailing forms.
- Completing forms over the phone.

Regardless of how you register participants, ensure that sharing sensitive health information is done securely and in compliance with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements.



How will I verify Diabetes Prevention Recognition Program (DPRP) requirements for participant eligibility using blood test results?

Using **DPRP Standards**, at least 35% of participants in the year-long cohort must have either a blood test indicating prediabetes or a history of gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM). The remainder of participants in the cohort (a maximum of 65%) must qualify by using their **CDC/American Diabetes Association Prediabetes Risk Test** results. Below are some approaches for collecting blood test results remotely:

- Embed questions in your screening protocol about past doctor visits, which may have included a blood glucose test.
- Inform employers in your partner network that they can choose to require a blood glucose test as part of their screening process or use claims data to help determine participant eligibility.

Please note, any blood test used to determine program eligibility must have been administered within 1 year before participant enrollment.

What are my recruitment goals, and what metrics will I use to track my progress?

Before you begin recruiting program participants, it is important to set goals and identify the metrics you will use to measure success. You can define success by the number of participants who enrolled in response to a specific marketing initiative, the level of engagement on a social media page, the amount of activity driven to your website, or another appropriate outcome measure. Below are recommendations for monitoring the success of your promotion efforts.

- Identify goals and appropriate metrics for each marketing initiative to measure its success and progress.
- Aggregate and compile your tracking data to monitor and compare effectiveness across your marketing initiatives.
- If you plan to use targeted advertising as part of your recruitment plan, remember to assign a unique identifier for each campaign to track who your promotion reaches, how people engage with it, and where you're gaining the most visibility.

How Do I Assign a Unique Identifier to Track My Advertising Campaigns?

You can do this through the platform or service where you have purchased advertisements. You can also use online tools, including but not limited to Google Analytics, to create unique referral links if your ad campaigns will drive traffic to a specific web page. Google Analytics is a free and easy-to-use service to help track activity on your website.



Set.

Now that you have identified your recruitment goals and determined what success means for your program, you can select recruitment strategies that are feasible and best meet the needs of your organization. To help you get started, this section contains successful recruitment strategies employed by CDC-recognized organizations to promote the National DPP lifestyle change program. The strategies included below are not exhaustive. Other recruitment strategies may also be successful for your organization.

As you evaluate different recruitment strategies, factors specific to your organization will help you determine which strategies make the most sense. For example, the time it will take to achieve your recruitment goals will guide which strategies you may put into action. If your goal is to increase enrollment in the short term, consider offering a session zero, broadcasting a radio public service announcement, or posting new videos to your social media channels. If your goal is to establish stronger recruitment channels in the long term, you may focus on engaging with community partners and local health care organizations to establish new partnerships and referral pipelines to disseminate your message. Other factors that will help narrow down which recruitment strategies to use are listed below:

- Budget.
- Available staff and skills.
- The audience you want to reach.
- Current and potential communication channels.
- Efforts that have and have not worked in the past.
- Network and partnership support available.
- Program delivery mode.



Set.

Recruitment Strategies

Click on the flag icons for more detailed recommendations on executing each recruitment strategy.



Refresh Communication Materials

Update existing communication materials with tailored messaging for a specific audience and use new, varied channels to reach more potential participants.



Strengthen Friends and Family Referral Marketing

Word of mouth is a powerful marketing tool to promote programs through social networks. Ask current participants to refer their friends and family members at high risk.



Distribute Information through Email Listservs

Use new or existing listservs you can access. Listservs are an easy way to disseminate messaging to people within a network via e-mail.



Hold a Session Zero

Session zeros provide prospective participants an opportunity to learn more about the program, meet coaches, and get to know the technology used to deliver classes.



Engage Community Partners

Reconnect with your community partners. How are they staying engaged with their members? Request to incorporate your messaging in their newsletters or social media posts.



Secure Radio Public Service Announcements

Radio campaigns continue to be an effective way to communicate a message to a mass audience. For a targeted approach, select a radio station that serves a specific audience.



Use Social Media

Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn are often preferred channels of communication and how many audiences receive information. They also enable the ability to track the progress and success of outreach efforts.



Engage with Clinical Care Teams

Partnering with health care organizations and providers to increase referrals of participants diagnosed with prediabetes to your program is a valuable method of recruitment.



Use Video to Share Information and Promote Your Program

Whether it is TV commercials, or a short video posted on Facebook, videos are an effective way to quickly capture people's attention.

Go!

Recruitment Strategies in Action

You have prepared your organization for virtual recruitment and selected the recruitment strategies you want to carry out. Now, let's take a look at how the recruitment strategies can be executed. In the Go phase, you will find recommendations and tips on how to put into action recruitment strategies to increase awareness of your program.



Refresh Communication Materials

Consider distributing materials on multiple platforms with different types of messages tailored to the audiences you want to reach. Below are a few tips for creating effective communication materials and expanding your recruitment reach while working within a virtual or remote environment.

- Instead of physically distributing paper flyers, disseminate electronic flyers through e-mail listservs or post them to your social media platforms.
- Include on your website any promotional materials with messages such as “interactive real-time instructors,” “live online classes,” and “virtual programs now available!” Add a banner to your website to spread awareness of your new virtual program options. Share the banner with your partners and request that they promote it on their websites as well.
- Incorporate photographs or other graphics that show people engaging within a virtual environment.
- Include clear call-to-action statements in each piece of marketing collateral that make it easy for participants to know what their next step should be. Below are examples you can tailor to fit your materials:
 - *Talk to your doctor about your risk of having prediabetes.*
 - *Now is the time to take charge of your health and make a change. Enroll in the National DPP lifestyle change program today.*

Visit the [Marketing and Recruitment page](#) of the National DPP Customer Service Center or the [Ad Council Prediabetes Awareness Campaign Toolkit](#) for sample communication materials.

GO! Recruitment Strategies in Action



Strengthen Friends and Family Referral Marketing

Referral programs are a valuable form of marketing that require relatively little financial investment compared with other marketing efforts yet bring significant results. Implementing an ambassador program will encourage people to talk about your program within their social networks. For more guidance on how to design an ambassador program, refer to [CDC's Program Champion Strategy Toolkit](#).

Ambassador Program | Use an ambassador program like how the YMCA of Southeast North Carolina recruited ambassadors who were passionate about their program and enthusiastic to promote it to individuals in their social networks. Ambassadors were rewarded for their efforts with free YMCA services such as group fitness classes or one month free of membership dues.



Distribute Information through Email Listservs

E-mailing is a fundamental mode of communication. If you already have a membership listserv, use it to disseminate messaging to drive interest in your program. Capture the reader's attention by including stories of participants and lifestyle coaches or personal testimonials from trusted community leaders. Your partner organizations may also have listservs to communicate with their networks. Request to add your messaging to those communications.

GO! Recruitment Strategies in Action



Hold a Session Zero

Session zeros provide prospective participants an opportunity to learn more about your program, meet coaches, and get to know the technology used to deliver classes. These sessions can help participants understand what to expect in the program so they can determine their readiness to participate. The following are a few recommendations on hosting and promoting a successful virtual session zero:

Promote session zeros to local employers and organizations.

Partner with organizations such as local employers, churches, community organizations, living communities for seniors, or veterans' groups to offer session zeros to a captive audience.

Publicize session zeros.

Telecommunications platforms offer an opportunity to host session zeros online. Be aware of capacity constraints of these platforms when planning a session zero for a large audience. Consider recording parts of a session zero and posting them to your website.

Introduce the technology used to deliver classes.

Session zeros offer a great opportunity to expose prospective participants to the technology used to deliver classes and help them get comfortable with it. This is especially helpful with prospective participants who are not tech savvy or do not often use virtual telecommunications platforms.

Agenda Example for Your Virtual Session Zero

- Introductions.
- Technology training.
- What is the National DPP lifestyle change program?
- Why does it work?
- Demonstrate a program activity.
- Qualifying for the program.
- Are you ready?
- Complete virtual registration packets.

Please note, session zeros do not count as the first-class session. Data collection should begin at Session 1. Refer to the [FAQ: Session Zero CSC Page](#) to access a webinar on session zeros.

GO! Recruitment Strategies in Action



Engage Community Partners

Some churches and other community organizations are transitioning their communication and outreach efforts to online or virtual. Reach out to existing community partners to learn how they are staying connected with their members and ask to incorporate your messaging in their newsletters, social media posts, or virtual community events.

Religious Community Partners | Use religious community partners like Wilson Value Drugstore, a pharmacy located in Wilson, North Carolina, did because strong relationships existed with local churches where many participants learn about the National DPP lifestyle change program. When the COVID-19 pandemic prevented church members from gathering in person, Wilson Value Drugstore leveraged its existing partnership to continue to promote the program through word-of-mouth marketing. Wilson Value Drugstore worked with influential members of the church, including the pastor and a health and wellness coordinator, to maximize reach within the community to enroll full cohorts of participants.



Secure Radio Public Service Announcements (PSA)

Radio campaigns continue to be an effective way to communicate a message to a mass audience. Select a local radio station or online radio station that is available in a region that serves an audience you want to reach. Inviting a trusted community leader or member to be in the radio announcement to promote your program may resonate with listeners. Live announcer radio public service announcements are available on the CDC National DPP [Customer Service Center](#) in the PreventT2 Adaptable Promotional Materials section.

GO! Recruitment Strategies in Action



Use Social Media

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn reach thousands of people with a single click and track engagement with content posted on those platforms. Before creating content for social media, know the specific audience you want to reach and tailor your messaging to the needs and desires of that audience. For more guidance, visit [The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit](#) or [CDC's Diabetes Webinars and Videos page](#) to learn more about building a sustainable social media strategy.

Facebook Marketing | Use Facebook marketing like Prevo Drug, a pharmacy located in Asheboro, North Carolina, did that wanted to boost activity on its Facebook page. Staff noticed high levels of engagement on the page when videos were posted. They began regularly posting Q&A videos of their pharmacist answering questions asked by customers and community members. As the page gained more attention, Prevo Drug decided to hire a video production company to create a 1-minute video commercial promoting the National DPP lifestyle change program and posted this on their Facebook page.



Engage with Clinical Care Teams

Health care organizations, physicians, and clinical care teams play critical roles in identifying and managing people at risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Connect with your local community health centers and health care organizations (HCOs) to promote awareness of your program among providers. If you are an HCO wanting to strengthen your diabetes prevention efforts, visit the [American Medical Association Prevent Diabetes website](#). You will find resources that offer guidance to clinical care teams with free access to best-practice solutions, tools, and resources to assist in planning and carrying out a diabetes prevention strategy that includes communication and messaging approaches for your patient population.

GO! Recruitment Strategies in Action



Use Video to Share Information and Promote Your Program

Videos can quickly capture people's attention. With today's technology, you can create near-professional quality videos with a smartphone or tablet. Think about what type of content would resonate with your specific audience. What would motivate someone to enroll in your program? Is it a testimonial from a past participant? Is it a video that highlights the community support aspect of your program? Maybe it's a personal message from the lifestyle coach. Post these videos to your website, YouTube, and social media platforms. Short videos are also great to include as links in e-mails or e-newsletters. Also consider sharing videos with your community partners and asking them to include them on their social media platforms and in other communications.

Videos available for use:

- **Prediabetes Ad Council Awareness Campaign Videos**
- **Testimonials From Participants**
- **National DPP Promotional Video: Imagine**

Basic Tips for Creating Videos:

- Use a tripod to stabilize the camera and minimize movement.
- Use a simple and clean background to minimize visual distractions.
- Confirm you have proper lighting to highlight objects in the frame.
- Use a microphone to improve audio quality.

Other ideas for video content:

- Q&A with organization leadership.
- Community leader promoting the program.
- Testimonial from a program graduate.
- Lifestyle coach spotlight or video introduction.

Tracking and Evaluating Success

Using new or unfamiliar recruitment strategies may raise questions about the effect they will have on your program. As your organization plans and executes recruitment strategies, it is important to track the outcome of your efforts. This will help you determine which strategies are and are not effective in your situation. Having a clear understanding of which recruitment strategies work best will enable efficient planning and execution of future recruitment strategies to reach the populations you serve.

Visit the **National DPP Customer Service Center** for resources and information related to marketing and recruitment, along with other helpful content to support delivery of the National DPP lifestyle change program.



Appendix

Quick Reference

CDC Diabetes Prevention Recognition Program Standards (DPRP Standards)

The DPRP Standards explain how an organization may apply for, earn, and maintain CDC recognition.

CDC National Diabetes Prevention Program

The CDC National DPP website contains general information about the National DPP and provides resources for people at risk for type 2 diabetes, health care professionals, employers and insurers, and others.

Communication Guides

Marketing and Recruitment for the National DPP

Whether your organization delivers, covers, or promotes the National DPP lifestyle change program, these resources are available to help explain the burden of type 2 diabetes and CDC's evidence-based intervention program.

Ad Council Prediabetes Awareness Campaign Toolkit

Here you'll find material to help extend your reach. This page includes PSAs, videos, and helpful tips on engaging media and other partners in your local community, and more.

Building a Sustainable Social Media Strategy

This webinar covers the nuts and bolts of creating a social media strategy to engage with your audience and promote diabetes self-management education and the National DPP lifestyle change program.

The Health Communicator's Social Media Toolkit

Social media can help you increase the reach, access, and participation in your activities. This toolkit provides basic guidance and lessons learned in integrating social media into health communication campaigns.

CDC's Guide to Writing for Social Media

In this guide for beginners, you will find information to help you write more effectively to make the most of using social media channels, particularly Facebook, Twitter, and mobile phone text messaging.

Media Access Guide: A Resource for Community Health Promotion

Develop strong media partnerships to share your health messages and be a credible resource by the media. This resource includes tips on connecting with the media and a toolkit of media tip sheets, templates, and timelines.

Technical Assistance Resources

The National DPP Customer Service Center

If you need advice or are seeking technical assistance, submit a ticket on the National DPP CSC by selecting "Contact Us" or use the self-serve feature to search for resources and tools on your own.

CDC Health Communication and Marketing Toolkit

The purpose of this toolkit is to help organizations develop health communication and marketing plans to address type 2 diabetes prevention and management.