

Guideline to Hosting a Successful Family Gathering

Local get-togethers are a great way for members of the CdLS community to meet, make friends, and get a refreshing dose of family support. Our best advice, especially for your first event, is to benefit from our "lessons learned." Let us help you. Here are some basic steps:

1. Allow ample time for planning, recruiting, publicizing, and registering families to attend.

- We suggest allowing six to eight months for planning. It will not only give you time to plan but will give us time to provide you with administrative support.

2. Set a place, date, and time for your get-together.

- Locate a venue that is **both accessible and affordable**. Look for the following:
 - A space that has **direct access from indoors to outdoors**. This will allow independence for children while they are still in a safe area. It is also helpful if the venue has a pavilion for inclement weather.
 - A venue with **enough inside and outside space** to accommodate the number of people you anticipate will attend. You will not want to turn families away because the venue holds fewer people than want to join your celebration. Be aware of the room capacity of your inside space.
 - **Accessible restrooms**. Remember that your Family Gathering may include families who use strollers or wheelchairs. Families may need to change diapers or administer medication during the Family Gathering.
 - A venue that **clearly states the cost and all other items needed** to rent the space; this includes insurance, a security deposit, or a business license. No one likes to "discover" additional costs late in the game.
 - A venue that **allows access to the space before the event for set up** and is clear on the requirements for clean-up.
- Many families choose a local park with a playground, community center or pavilion. Other families prefer a church, senior center, youth center, or day camp with these features.



3. Complete the Family Gathering Form and email it to familyserVICESTeam@CdLSusa.org six (6) months before your event date.

- **When provided six months' notice, Family Service will support you by:**
 - Identifying families that live in your area and sending out ELECTRONIC Save the Date messages, invitations, and reminders.
 - Setting up online registration for guests and informing you who and how many people have registered and what they have signed up to bring if your gathering is a potluck.
 - Publicizing your gathering in *Reaching Out*, on our website and social media.
 - Helping you locate local social services agencies to attend or share information about resources in your area at your gathering.
 - Sending you CdLS publications, CdLS Awareness materials, name tags, a sign-in sheet, and a letter providing the Foundation's tax-exempt status that you can use when shopping for supplies or renting space.
 - Contacting any members of the CdLS Clinical Advisory Board that may be located in your area to see if they are available to attend your gathering.
 - Helping you locate a local Sibshop or other sibling support agency to facilitate sibling activities.
 - Helping you apply for funding that, if granted, may offset some of the costs incurred for the Family Gathering.
- ***When provided with less than six months' notice, we will assist. However, we cannot offer full administrative support as outlined above.***

4. Decide what you can do yourself and what you need others to do.

- **Most Family Gatherings are potluck.** The host family provides a main dish, such as pizza or sandwiches, and asks families to bring side dishes, salads, desserts, or beverages. We will add the sign-up list to the electronic registration.
 - Don't forget paper goods, plastic cutlery, paper tablecloths if needed, and coolers with ice to hold beverages.
- **Recruit family and friends to help** set up, write name tags, welcome families as they arrive, ensure participants sign in, and keep things flowing.
- **Recruit a volunteer photographer!** Ask a family friend or a local high schooler to take some photos at the event. This is the best way to capture the magic of the Family Gathering.



5. Provide age-appropriate activities for siblings.

- Having an indoor-to-outdoor space helps make this possible. Young children can color, use Play-Doh, make a simple craft, or use the playground. Outdoor settings allow scavenger hunts, bubbles, or oversized games that can often be borrowed from a local library.

6. You may raise funds* locally to cover your costs.

- Local merchants may donate paper goods, flatware, beverages, rolls, pizza, etc. Don't be afraid to ask - businesses and community organizations often want to help. Be sure to use the letter providing information on the CdLS Foundation and our tax-exempt status.

7. Please share pictures of the event with us!

- When we cannot attend a Family Gathering, we love to see what we missed! Take candid shots throughout the afternoon, set up a time for a group photo, and try to get everyone in it.

8. SEND the completed sign-in sheet to familyserVICESTeam@CdLSusa.org.

- We want to know who attended!

9. MOST IMPORTANTLY, HAVE A GREAT TIME!

**Please note that all fundraising at a CdLS Foundation event needs prior approval. No personal fundraising at Foundation-sponsored events is permitted.*



CdLS Foundation Family Gathering Form

Save the Date Details

Meet, mingle, and share with families for a CdLS Foundation Family Gathering.

State or Region	
Host(s)	
Date	
Time (including time zone) Start time to end time	
Location (including address)	
Website or contact information of the facility	
Special directions: which entrance to use, where to park, how to find the group, etc.	
Anything families cannot bring to the facility (e.g., glitter, sidewalk chalk)	

**There will be activities for the whole family!
We can't wait to see you there.**

Questions? Email Family Service at familyserVICESTeam@CdLSusa.org.

