



Blood Drives

Blood drives are a great option for groups that can draw on a large community to fill donation appointments. Blood drives garner plenty of publicity, can be held almost anywhere and require minimal organization and cost. Blood donation agencies often provide event organizing and promoting training. For smaller teams, bring your members to a Red Cross Blood Donation site during a specific time period and celebrate after with food together.



Red Cross Eligibility (subject to change, different for palette and plasma donations)

- Healthy people over the age of 16 who weigh at least 110 lbs may donate.
- Donations can only occur every 56 days
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) prohibits blood donation agencies from accepting blood from “men who have sex with men.” The purported rationale is to protect the 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. 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 information about advocating against the deferral period for men who have sex with men, see p.4.

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. Teammates should help advertise and recruit donors, and be available to assist donors during the event.
- **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.

Blood Drives

- **Bleed & Feed.** If your team is unable to organize or host your own blood drive, consider gathering eligible volunteers to take to 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 the donation agency.
- Post directional signs at entrances, crossroads, etc.
- Set up tables and chairs for the sign-in.
- Contact no-shows and ask them to reschedule.
- 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.

Advocating Against the *Men who have sex with men* Blood Deferral Program

The American Humanist Association is calling on volunteers across the country to demand this unscientific ban to be lifted and replaced with individualized risk-based assessments. This change would align U.S. policy with evidence-based best practices and would improve the safety of blood donation from all sources.

We've all heard calls for donation when blood stores run low in our local communities or during and after an emergency. But, not all healthy people can donate blood. Millions of U.S. residents still cannot donate blood due to a discriminatory policy excluding men who have had sex with other men (MSM) within the last three months. Female and nonbinary partners of MSM are also prohibited from donating blood for three months following their "exposure". This time frame is not based on any scientific research.

What can you do?

- **Advocate at your blood drive.** By spreading awareness of the MSM deferral issue at the same time, you're making two important impacts at once. At your blood drive, you'll

Blood Drives

want to plan to cooperate with the blood bank to peacefully spread awareness of the MSM blood ban to other donors and collect petition signatures. We do *not* encourage antagonizing blood banks, vilifying blood drives, or boycotting blood donations. That said, here's what you can do:

- **Ask if the blood bank will permit you to set up a table or cabinet.** Distribute literature, be visible, and talk to the community there.
 - **Be visible.** Wear shirts or buttons that prompt people to ask you about the campaign. Build an eye-catching display and have literature to share.
 - **Collect petition signatures.** Bring physical paper signups or a device and ask donors to sign your petition to the FDA. ([See sample petition language here](#))
 - **Talk to donors about the issue.**
 - **Tell people what you're up to on social media.** Include details about your planned advocacy when you announce the drive on your Facebook or Meetup event.
 - **Post about it afterward.** Take pictures of your advocacy in action. Share the results with us and we'll help amplify them!
-
- **Are you MSM?**
 - **Attend a drive as a MSM activist.** Talk to people at the drive about why you aren't allowed to donate. Consider tabling or wearing a button with a prompt like "ask why I can't donate."
 - **Recruit straight allies to donate on your behalf.** Consider raising awareness on social media about the issue and see how many people you can recruit to donate because you are not allowed.

- **Can you demonstrate at a blood drive held at your school, workplace, or other community location?**

Consider the above recommendations and distribute a letter on campus like [this one used by LGBTQ Bar activists at Berkley](#). Ask the blood bank whether you can volunteer during the event, and use your visibility to help spread the message.

Do not:

- Vilify or discourage blood donation
- Antagonize or protest the blood donation facility or blood drive organizers