

Coordinator Guide

Introduction

As a Tar Wars state/regional coordinator, you are responsible for the organization, operation, and administration of the Tar Wars program in your state or region. You have the option to hold an annual state poster contest. It may be important to implement fund raising/grant writing or media/public relations efforts in order to run your program.

Your involvement is needed for Tar Wars to provide children with valuable tobacco-free education. The amount of time you will be able to dedicate to coordinating a Tar Wars program in your state depends on several factors.

- Is it part of your current job description?
- Do you work for an AAFP constituent chapter/foundation that supports the program?
- Are you in a residency program, medical school, or with a health department?
- Will your role be a full-time, part-time, or volunteer effort?
- Do you have support staff or other volunteers to assist you?

Your answers to these questions play a part in the level of commitment you are able to bring to the position.

Coordinating Tar Wars in Your State and Community

Step 1 – Planning

Read the Tar Wars Program Guide so you can explain the program to schools, potential presenters, and others in your community from whom you may be seeking support and funding. Develop a plan for implementing Tar Wars to help you get organized. Divide project tasks into manageable pieces that can be organized into a checklist from highest to lowest priority. If possible, form a team to help manage the program.

Step 2 – Gaining Community Support

Community involvement is an important aspect of a successful Tar Wars program. Gaining support, developing collaborative partnerships, and promoting ongoing relationships with community members or groups can be beneficial for your program.

Form relationships with local school boards, PTA/PTO groups, medical schools, residency programs, hospitals, other health care professionals, health departments, law enforcement agencies, and faith-based organizations. Suggest presenting Tar Wars in conjunction with existing health/wellness-based programs. Collaborative partnerships with other programs and groups can be rewarding for your program.

Prize Donations

Local merchants who hear about Tar Wars may want to donate prizes or services for your poster contest. Contacting a variety of community members and organizations increases the number and type of prize donations you receive and may include gift certificates, products, and monetary awards. In return, they receive recognition for supporting a worthwhile cause.

Judges

Consider inviting high-profile community members, such as legislators, news anchors, sports figures, and local celebrities, to be a judge for your poster contest. Their participation can create excitement and add recognition to the program and your poster contest.

Media/PR

Media contacts in print, radio, and television can generate public awareness and interest in your Tar Wars program. Contact local newspapers to suggest an article with a photo of your state Tar Wars poster winner. Get more exposure by displaying posters in local museums, city halls, libraries, shopping malls, post offices, and other community locations.

Step 3 – Scheduling Tar Wars Presentations

Although Tar Wars can be presented anytime during the school year, it is best to start communicating with schools and presenters no later than October.

In addition, please encourage your presenters and teachers to submit the online presentation questionnaire following their classroom presentation. These forms are used to gain an understanding of how teachers and presenters view the Tar Wars program, as well as their classroom presentation.

AAFP Tar Wars national office requests that each state coordinator submit the one-page year-end summary (due in August), which provides Tar Wars staff with feedback and statistics on the program in your state.

Step 4 – Student Contests

The optional poster contest can reinforce the tobacco-free message presented during the classroom presentation. If you decide to hold a state poster contest, encourage your schools to participate.

If you are in charge of organizing a state poster contest, you may find the following information helpful.

Organizing a State Poster Contest

- Reserve a location for your poster contest and display of posters.
- Secure judges, high profile if possible (a media VIP will almost always ensure some sort of coverage).
- Solicit local merchants for prizes or donated services.
- Track and number the posters for set up and judging.

A Week Before the Contest

- Send news releases to the media announcing the poster contest.
- Confirm availability of selected judges.
- Confirm attendance of invited media.
- Confirm location reservations.
- Send invitations to your event to teachers, students, presenters, prize donors, and anyone else involved with the program.
- Make copies of the instructions and score sheet for judges.

On the Day of the Contest

- Remember to bring award ribbons, certificates, and prizes; judging instructions and score sheets, pencils, and clipboards; and other props or items for the contest.
- Arrive at the location early to set up posters.
- Meet with judges to clarify judging instructions.
- Start on time; end on time.
- Announce your community's poster contest winners and tag the winning poster(s).
- Recognize prize donors.
- Send a press release to local media.

Step 5 – Wrapping Up

A written thank you letter or email note sent to all participants aids in the ongoing success of your community's Tar Wars program. These do not need to be formal, just concise in content, personalized to your audience, and leave participants with a great feeling about their participation in the program. Publicly praise individuals and/or groups who helped to make your program a success.

Questions?

If you have questions, needs, or suggestions, please contact AAFP Tar Wars staff at tarwars@aafp.org or 800-274-2237, ext. 3135 or ext. 3112.