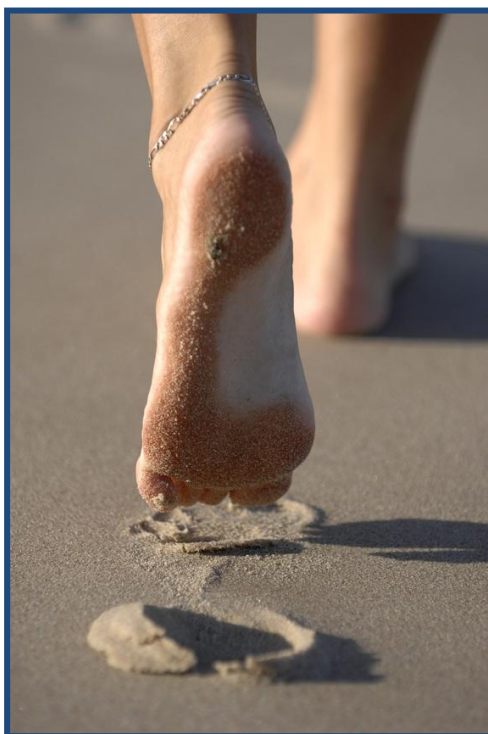


Walk for Life

Resource Guide



Miami-Dade County **Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces** Planning and Research

Forward

We face a health crisis today that is blind to age, race or ethnicity, and an epidemic that poses a serious threat to the health and welfare of our nation.

Over the last twenty years there has been a dramatic increase in the percentage of overweight and obese people in the United States and that number continues to grow. This is an epidemic that will have long term consequences if not addressed now.

Today, we know a lot more about older adults and their need to exercise. Regardless of their health and physical abilities, older adults can gain a lot by staying physically active. Even if someone has difficulty standing or walking, they can still exercise and benefit from it. In fact, in most cases, there is more to lose by *not* doing anything.

As a Department **we are committed** to and will focus our programming efforts on providing opportunities for all in our community to improve their health, wellness and fitness through a diverse menu of physically active recreation programs and classes.

More importantly, **we are committed** to work to help the children in our community lay the foundation for a healthier lifestyle through a broad range of active program and activities.

Benefits of Exercise

Having fun and socializing are the major reasons active people give when asked why they exercise.

What kinds of exercises and physical activities help to improve health, wellness and physical ability?

Exercises generally fall into four main categories: endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility. Though described separately, some activities fit into several categories. For example, many endurance activities also help build strength, and strength exercises can help improve balance.

Endurance: Endurance, or aerobic, activities can increase breathing and heart rate. These activities help keep participants healthy, improve fitness, and help accomplish the tasks one might do every day. Endurance exercises can help to improve the health of the heart, lungs, and circulatory system. They also delay or prevent many diseases that are common in older adults such as diabetes, colon and breast cancers, heart disease, and others.

Physical activities that build endurance include:

- *brisk walking, jogging or biking*
- *climbing stairs*
- *dancing*
- *swimming*
- *playing tennis*

Strength: Even small increases in muscle strength can make a big difference in the ability to stay independent and carry out everyday activities such as climbing stairs and carrying groceries. Some people call using weight to improve your muscle strength “strength training” or “resistance training.”

Strength exercises include:

- *lifting weights*
- *using a resistance band*

Balance: Balance exercises can help to prevent falls, a common problem in older adults. Many lower-body strength exercises can also improve balance.

Exercises to improve balance:

- *standing on one foot*
- *heel-to-toe walk*
- *Tai Chi*

Flexibility: Stretching can help your body stay flexible and limber, which allows more freedom of movement for regular physical activity as well as for everyday activities.

To increase flexibility:

- *shoulder and upper arm stretch*
- *calf stretch*
- *yoga*

Exercise and Everyday Activities Go Together

Exercise and physical activity improve health. In addition, improving endurance, strength, balance, and flexibility can help in many everyday activities. For example:

Endurance activities will make it easier to:

- *push your grandchildren on the swings*
- *vacuum*

Strength training will make it easier to:

- *carry a full laundry basket*
- *carry grandchildren*

Balance exercises will make it easier to:

- *reach something on the top shelf*
- *climb stairs*

Flexibility exercises will make it easier to:

- *make the bed*
- *tie your shoes*

Benefits of Walking

Walking is a tremendous aerobic activity that provides a wide and diverse range of physical and mental benefits.

Literature clearly supports that walking is effective in sustaining physical fitness and that brisk walking has the greatest potential for increasing overall fitness level. Regular physical activity can help participants to maintain an appropriate body weight and to reduce the risk of obesity.

Studies show that walking can help:

- *reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke*
- *reduce high cholesterol and improve blood lipid profile*
- *reduce body fat*
- *reduce risk of diabetes*
- *reduce risk of colon cancer*
- *reduce stress*
- *lower blood pressure*
- *help to control body weight*
- *increase bone density, thereby helping to prevent osteoporosis*
- *improve endurance and strength*
- *increase flexibility and balance hence reducing the risk of falls*
- *enhance mental well-being*
- *provide relaxation*
- *with socialization skills*

Let's Start Early! Childhood can be an important time to lay the foundation for good health practices by regularly participating in active recreation programs and physical fitness activities.

We are committed to, as a part of this document and other Recreation Program Plan initiatives, make available and encourage children to participate in physically active programs or at least to walk for exercise.

Community Benefits

Despite considerable evidence that physical activity is a powerful way to prevent sickness and disease, a significant number of children, adults and seniors are not active enough to reap the health benefits of regular exercise. A direct result is an increasing cost to our health-care system.

Literature suggests that communities can realize financial benefits by encouraging walking.

Studies show that:

- *getting more adults, seniors and children to choose walking and cycling as transportation and leisure options provides incredible environmental, economical and personal health benefits*

- *the social and physical environment in which we live, learn, work and play have the greatest effect on our decision to be physically active*
- *climate significantly influences physical activity*

Barriers and Challenges to Participation

Identifying barriers and challenges in our community that get in the way of physical activity and then putting strategies in place to deal with them is an important step.

Regular physical activity is associated with a healthier, longer life. We can safely say that most people know this, but what keeps people from being physically active? Research has found that the strongest evidence that “people will become more physically active is in response to the creation of or improved access to places for physical activity (parks), available programs, combined with distribution of information and community-based campaigns.”

In most cases barriers and challenges to participation may be related to access, availability and/or lack of information. There are also more personal challenges which can be more difficult to identify and deal with, but remain barriers and challenges to being physically activity for some people.

Commonly identified barriers and challenges to physical activity:

- *a preference for doing other things, a lack of spare time, a lack of energy*
- *lack of self-motivation; don't like to exercise; not convenient*
- *lack encouragement and support from family and friends*
- *other responsibilities that take precedence*
- *distance and/or transportation issues*
- *lack of child care*
- *poor general health; obese/overweight*
- *fear of injury*
- *climate*
- *cost*

We are committed to work to eliminate the barriers and challenges of participating in recreation activities by providing support and by making it convenient, inclusive, safe, rewarding, fun and free!

Walk for Life

Program Implementation

Walk for Life can be implemented as a follow-up to the Walk with Ease program in any programmed park. Phase 1 will consist of hub sites as listed here. Phase 2 will consist of all other programmed parks.

Hub Park Sites

North Region

Arcola Lakes Park
Country Village Park
Gwen Cherry Park
Highland Oaks Park

Central Region

Continental Park
North Trail Park
Tropical Estates Park (Ruben Dario)
Westwind Lakes Park

South Region

Deerwood Park
Goulds Park
South Dade Park
West Perrine Park

Strategies for a Sustainable Walk for Life Program

Given the diversity of Miami-Dade County and the many benefits that walking can produce, there are a number of factors important to designing, implementing and more importantly, sustaining a Walk for Life program.

There are strategies involved in developing and sustaining a successful Walk for Life program. Some of the most important ones include:

- *open / self-directed program*
- *effective leadership*
- *participant recognition / reward*
- *leader guided walks (identify a group leader – help establish a club)*
- *more structured Walking Program for youth*

Initially most walking programs tend to attract keen walkers, but as time goes, the social element of walking attracts and retains more people.

We are committed to make available a Walk for Life program at all programmed parks; develop specialty clubs and make every effort to encourage participants to join.

We are committed to include opportunities to get children involved. Through other programming initiatives **we are committed** to establish age associated Walking Clubs where possible.

Let's Start Early!

People walk for many reasons – they walk for pleasure, they walk to experience the outdoors, to socialize with friends or to mitigate the effects of a health condition. Whatever the case, people walk more often than any other type of fitness activity.

There are many types of Walking Programs. Our “Walk for Life Program’ is open to anyone of any age on a drop-in, self-directed basis.

We are however committed to, in addition to our “General Walk for Life Program”, market and promote specialty Walking Clubs.

Specialty Walking Clubs may include but are not limited to the following:

1. *Stroller Walking Club for Mothers (or fathers) with Babies*
2. *Walk to School Club (children)*
3. *Morning Mile*
4. *Pedometer Walking Club*
5. *Dog Walking Club*
6. *Walking Club for Teens*
7. *Walking Club for Women*
8. *Walking Club for Men*

Marketing

Knowing and understanding what promotional activities and materials can be effective in reaching an audience is critical in sustaining any program. Identifying an effectual method of distribution is just as important.

We are committed to:

1. *provide branded flyers and promotional Walk for Life posters to each park for distribution*
2. *post Walk for Life program Posters in the recreation center / nearest library / neighborhood grocery*
3. *distribute Walk for Life flyers within our neighborhoods / at libraries / and through other events*
4. *promote Specialty Clubs*
 - Organize Youth Walking Clubs (Let’s Start Early; Morning Mile)*
 - Organize Dog Walking Clubs (in Dog-Friendly Parks)*

Registration

In order to qualify to receive recognition and/or rewards for participation those that participate will be required to register with the park.

Each person that registers for the Walk for Life program will receive a “Walk for Life – Walk 2B Fit!” T-Shirt!

We are committed that:

1. all participants complete a program registration form
2. participants complete a Participation Survey
3. registration information is loaded into RMS
4. participants will be added to the Daily and Weekly Program Roster and Participation Board
5. participants will be given Levels of Achievement incentive program (flyer)

Schedule

Walk for Life is considered an “at-will” or self-directed activity. As such there is not a scheduled start or ending time associated with the program. Participants will walk where and when it is convenient to them. Park Staff will be available to collect and record participation results as reported by Program participants.

Walk for Life Program Levels of Achievement

Short-term successes will contribute to long-term effectiveness.

Measuring and rewarding participant success is critical to ongoing continued participation. As mentioned earlier those that register (completes registration form) for the Walk for Life Program will receive a “Walk for Life - Walk 2B Fit” T-Shirt.

Establishing Goals and Rewarding Achievement

Goals

Many people find that having firm goals in mind helps to motivate them. Success generally depends on setting goals that are specific, that matter and can be achieved through realistic effort.

We are committed to:

1. provide a Program Participant Short and Long Term Goal Work Sheet
2. have participants establish both short and long term goals
3. have participants complete the Work Sheet
4. load goals into RMS

Subsequent rewards associated with participation and achievement of program goals are as follows:

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Reward</u>
100 Miles	“I Walked 100 Miles and Loved Every Step” T-Shirt and Participation Certificate
300 Miles	“I Walked 300 Miles and Loved Every Step” T-Shirt and Water Bottle
500 Miles	“I Walked 500 Miles and Loved Every Step” T-Shirt and Pedometer
700 Miles	“I Walked 700 Miles and Loved Every Step” T-Shirt and Gift Certificate

We are committed to:

1. *make available a hardcopy or electronic copy of the "Weekly Participation Form"*

Participants can complete the form weekly or report daily results to park staff

Each Friday Staff will:

1. *load results into RMS*
2. *update Program Participation Board*

Program Evaluation

Evaluation lets us know if our programs made a difference and whether the expected outcomes were achieved.

Outcomes are defined as the overall results expected and/or desired. They are the reasons why the program is carried out. How will we evaluate the effectiveness of our Walk for Life Program?

Program effectiveness will be based on the following:

1. Registration / Participation Numbers and Miles Walked
2. Participation Surveys (Registration; Program; and Exit) to be delivered as a part of the registration process, then periodically throughout the program and then again as a participant stops participating or exits the program.

Registration Survey will identify outcomes and/or goals the participant would like to achieve

Program Survey will determine if the program is helping to achieve outcomes and goals

Exit Survey will determine participant satisfaction

Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department
Walk for Life Program

Registration Form

Participant's Name: _____

Date Started Program: _____

Park: _____

Address	
City and Zip Code	
Best Contact Telephone Number	
Email Address	
Date of Birth	
Gender (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Male <input type="checkbox"/> Female
Race (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Black / African American <input type="checkbox"/> White / Caucasian <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer
Ethnicity (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Non-Hispanic <input type="checkbox"/> Haitian <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to answer
Marital Status (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Divorced <input type="checkbox"/> Partnered <input type="checkbox"/> Married <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed <input type="checkbox"/> Never Married <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer
Physical Disability (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer
Personal Income (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than \$15,000 <input type="checkbox"/> \$15,000 to \$24,999 <input type="checkbox"/> \$25,000 to 49,999 <input type="checkbox"/> More than \$50,000 <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer

Household (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Live alone <input type="checkbox"/> Live with another person <input type="checkbox"/> Live with my children <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer
Highest level of education (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Never attended school <input type="checkbox"/> Elementary School <input type="checkbox"/> Some High School <input type="checkbox"/> Completed High School <input type="checkbox"/> Some College or Vocational School <input type="checkbox"/> Completed College or Vocational School <input type="checkbox"/> Masters or Doctorate Degree <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer
Health Insurance (check the appropriate box)	<input type="checkbox"/> Medicare <input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid <input type="checkbox"/> Have no insurance <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to Answer
MUST COMPLETE THIS INFORMATION	
Emergency Contact Person (Name)	
Relationship	
Address	
Best Contact Telephone Number	

I, the undersigned, intending to be legally bound, do hereby for myself, my heirs, executors and administrators, waive and release any and all rights and claims for damage which I may have against Miami-Dade County, their representatives, successors and employees for any injuries which I may sustain in connection with my participation in the Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department Walk for Life Program.

Participants Signature: _____

Date: _____

Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department advises all program participants to seek the approval of your medical advisor before beginning any new exercise program.

T-Shirt Sizes (circle one):

Youth: Small Medium Large

Adult: Small Medium Large XL XXL

Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department
Walk for Life Program

Weekly Log

Participant's Name: _____

Date Started Program: _____

Park: _____

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date	Date
<u>Miles Walked</u>	<u>Miles Walked</u>	<u>Miles Walked</u>	<u>Miles Walked</u>	<u>Miles Walked</u>	<u>Miles Walked</u>	<u>Miles Walked</u>
<u>Location</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Location</u>

Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department
Walk for Life Program

Participant Goals Worksheet

Participant's Name: _____

Date Started Program: _____

Park: _____

Short Term Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Long Term Goals

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Miami-Dade County Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Department
Walk for Life Program

Participant Achievement

Participant's Name: _____

Date Started Program: _____

Park: _____

100 Mile Club

- I Walked 100 Miles and Loved Every Step T-Shirt
- Participation Certificate

Date _____

Date _____

300 Mile Club

- I Walked 300 Miles and Loved Every Step T-Shirt
- Water Bottle

Date _____

Date _____

500 Mile Club

- I Walked 500 Miles and Loved Every Step T-Shirt
- Pedometer

Date _____

Date _____

700 Mile Club

- I Walked 700 Miles and Loved Every Step T-Shirt
- Gift Certificate

Date _____

Date _____