

Guide to Planning Your Event

How your event can benefit children

Mental health experts have rated fishing as one of the best outdoor activities for children. It is one of the few activities where a youngster can outperform an adult. For example, a child has an excellent chance to catch a larger fish than a parent. This provides a legitimate sense of accomplishment and a logical source for sincere praise. These are two of the most essential elements contributing to a child's feeling of self-confidence. Moreover, fishing is often done in a quiet setting with youngsters and adults waiting anxiously for the next bite. The thrill of the catch, or just the anticipation of a bite, adds enormously to the enjoyment of the experience. This connection can add immeasurably to the feeling of self-worth often lacking in kids at risk. Whether the youngster is physically, emotionally or socially challenged, your selfless act of providing a day of fishing can be far more significant than you might ever imagine.

Getting Started

There are a few fundamental decisions that your organization must make before getting down to the implementation stages. The first step is to decide what type of event you intend to host.

Just Kids, or Kids and Parents

Taking responsibility for safely managing children will add to the manpower you require for your event. For shoreline fishing, one adult to every 4-5 youngsters is a safe ratio for most settings. If you intend to have children fishing from a boat, one adult can handle no more than three passengers. Depending on the extent to which children may be physically or emotionally challenged, the supervision ratio could drop to 1 to 1. If parents are fishing, they should be asked to monitor the safety of their children. Event staff should always be on the lookout for youngsters who appear to be beyond the immediate control of an adult.

Fishing from Shore or a Boat

This decision plays an important role in where your event is held. If shore fishing, it is essential to have adequate safe space where children can fish. Most fish are not far from shore, so shoreline fishing can be very productive. Docks, piers or other permanent shoreline structures can also provide great fishing opportunities. Obviously, those with safety railings are ideal, but others should not be overlooked, provided adequate adult supervision is in place. Another important consideration is the amount of room each angler will have. The concern here is that youngsters have enough room to cast without accidentally hooking another child or adult. Keep this in mind when allocating space for each participant. If you anticipate the use of boats, a nearby boat launch is a must. Ensure that the launch is in good condition and has ample parking nearby. It is a good idea to have at least 2 volunteers present to assist boaters in launching their craft. (Many boaters are not as adept at this activity as you might think.) This is a good time to check each boat for all the required safety equipment. Boat operators must have a valid Pleasure Craft Operator Card

How many participants can you invite?

The nature of your event and the number of adult volunteers available will be the primary deciding factors in the number of anglers to host. A safe and enjoyable event should be your first goal. You can have an extremely successful event with both large and small groups. The degree of supervision and the suitability of the event site will help you determine whether to try to accommodate 300 participants or 30. The emphasis should be on the quality of the experience for the child, rather than the number of participants you host.

Timing and duration of the event

Events can be held any time of year where water or ice conditions are safe. Whether you choose summer or winter, fishing events can be lots of fun. Obviously, particular attention must be paid to ice and fast water conditions. The Ontario Family Fishing Week occurs during the first full week of July each year. Fishing licenses are not required so this is an excellent time to schedule an event if parents are invited to fish. National Fishing Week coincides with this same week in Ontario and the media is full of fishing-related content, making media coverage easy to garner. In Ontario, the third weekend in February is also a licence free period and another good time to plan a family ice fishing derby.

Another important decision is what time of day to start and end your event and how long the youngsters are expected to fish. There is no need to start fishing at 6:00 a.m. or 7:00 a.m. This simply adds stress for all concerned. It is recommended that you begin your event at about 9:00 a.m. with the fishing period ending no later than 1:00 p.m. Kids do not have long attention spans, as most parents know.

Prizes and giveaways

Each organization or Police Association that decides to host a Kid, Cops and Canadian Tire fishing event will receive a "fishing kit" the contents of which change each year. We strive to give each participant two logo items to take home as a remembrance of their day. Our website is updated annually with a list of our current logo items and any prizes that we have received and can donate to the events.

Fishing equipment

Many children may not own their own fishing equipment. Depending on the nature of your event, you may find it necessary to borrow or otherwise provide equipment and/or bait for your participants. Local fishing clubs or tackle retailers are one possible source of rods, reels and equipment. Fishing Forever also has rods that are available to borrow for an event. Contact us for more details.

You will want to have extra bobbers, fishing line and split shot sinkers on hand in case any of the participants require these basic items.

If possible, provide bait for the event. Worms are still the bait of choice for kids and local tackle stores may be willing to provide them either free or at a discounted price. This is a good item to ask a supporting business to provide.

Lifejackets and PFD's

We highly encourage you to have all participants wear lifejackets or personal flotation devices. Whether fishing or just exploring the shoreline, mishaps can occur. Even adults are advised to wear their PFDs, not only for their safety, but also to demonstrate to children that it is a logical and necessary piece of fishing equipment. There are lifejackets available to borrow from Fishing Forever. Contact us for more details.

Other Event Activities

While fishing is intended to be the focal activity of the Kids, Cops and Canadian Tire Fishing Days, you may wish to consider other activities such as a casting competition, knot tying or MNR resource education exhibits. Local police, fire or ambulance services are often willing to bring their canine or marine units, patrol cars, fire and rescue trucks or other equipment to these events as well.

What about food?

Kids have voracious appetites when they escape to the outdoors. Parents are encouraged to bring a few nutritious snacks and water. In many cases, youth fishing events culminate with a free barbecue for participants. Business sponsors for the barbecue are usually not difficult to source. Even if the food and drinks are purchased, the average cost per child is usually less than \$2.00.

What the kids should bring?

- Fishing rod, reel and tackle, if not otherwise provided
- Drinks and snacks
- Personal flotation devices (PFDs)
- Appropriate clothing
- Sunscreen
- Insect repellent
- Camera

Other considerations

While all police officers are trained in first aid, you may wish to seek additional help from the local St. John's Ambulance Chapter. If none is available, ensure that adequate, fully stocked first aid kits are on hand. Another obvious consideration is the proximity of adequate washrooms. Portable "biffy" rental businesses exist in most communities and they may be willing to donate or reduce the cost of the items.

Local Sponsors

You will find that many local businesses will be keen to help support your event with products, services or possibly a cash donation to help defray expenses. Reaching out to potential community partners is definitely worth the time and effort and makes your event a true community endeavour.

Media for your event

It is important to promote your event, especially if you are inviting local children to participate. A pre-event media release is an ideal way to get the details out to the public and to recognize your local sponsors. We will work with you to write and send out the release to radio stations, newspapers and TV stations in your community. A sample press release can be found on our website at www.kidsandcops.ca. In many cases, a local reporter will attend the event and there will be post event photos and articles published. This will serve to reinforce the positive accomplishments of your event and set the stage for hosting another fishing day next year.