

Community Dinner Planning Guide

4 Weeks to Event:

- Find a location
- Pick a date
TIP: pick a date at least a month away. Run the date by the contact person at the event location
- Invite families
TIP: be sure to ask about food allergies
- Find volunteers
Note: The number of volunteers will depend a bit on how many families will be invited. We suggest 1 volunteer per table, so typically this would mean a total of 6-8 volunteers
- Reach out to *The Family Dinner Project* to get program resources for your event

2-3 Weeks to Event:

- Determine your menu for the evening
Tip: We have found that tacos work well - put together “assembly line” style. Our *sample shopping list* can help you plan.
- Determine where food and supplies will come from
Tip: There are often groups willing to provide food, like local restaurants, community gardens, or even grocery stores.

Tip: Attempt to have local stores donate other supplies as well, such as plates, napkins, utensils (if not provided by the location), etc.
- Start to think about room set-up
- Schedule the evening
Tip: It’s helpful to have a clear plan for the night, but be prepared for things to go differently. With many families in one room, flexibility is key. Our *sample agenda* is a good starting point.

1 Week to Event:

- Reach out to families that will be attending the event
Tip: Tell them how excited you are for the event and ask them if they have any questions or concerns about the evening.
- Check out the space (if you haven’t already)
Tip: Find out where things are located, like tables, chairs, light switches, and outlets. Think about the layout of the room and where you will set up sign-in, dinner tables, and food prep stations
- Check in with the team (volunteers, facilitator, etc)
Tip: Make sure everyone knows times, dates, expectations, and any other logistics that are necessary for the event. Go over the schedule so everyone is on the same page
- Shop for any items that were not donated

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- Print copies of the agenda for all volunteers
 - Put together materials for families to take home

Day Before Event:

- Finalize food plans
Tip: Check in with everyone to make sure that everything is ready for tomorrow
- Review the agenda
Tip: Have a printed copy to bring along on the day of. This will probably change as the night goes on, but it helps to have a plan in place. Transitions tend to take longer than you expect - it will be helpful to know what you can do without in case you fall behind schedule.

1 Week After Event:

- Send families thank you email with links to TFDP resources
- Send TFDP a copy of your sign-in sheet and final head count
Tip: If you have any pictures or great anecdotes from the event, you should share them with the TFDP team as well so they can publicize your work!

Item Checklist:

- Tables: round tables are best, but any table will do in a pinch
 - Chairs: Have a few extra chairs just in case grandma or some friends show up
 - Dishes, glassware, silverware: Real dishes make dinner special, but paper is just fine too.
Tip: It is easiest if you can host at a location with dishes available for use
 - Tablecloths: Something simple works nicely
Tip: See if you can borrow from friends and family. Don't be afraid of mismatching! Different tablecloths will give each table its own look and feel, and create atmosphere.
 - Serving utensils and dishware: Be sure to think through what you might need
 - Table decorations: Flowers, candles (real or battery powered) and name cards are great.
Tip: Decorations can be anything that will make the table feel special, and show families how little touches can make a big difference.
 - Napkins: Cloth or paper be sure you have them!
 - Salt & pepper shakers
 - Nametags
Tip: A great habit to get into at the beginning of the night is to hand out nametags, so everyone can get to know each other
 - Markers/pens: Have them on hand for nametags and other activities
 - Food containers: You will need serving dishes for each portion of the meal
 - Microphone or bell: use it to get everyone's attention in a noisy room
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