

CARA BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES

Adopted: December 1990

Revised: October 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009

The following Best Practices Guidelines have been prepared by the Chicago Area Runners Association (CARA) for Race Directors and race committees to ensure quality, safe and successful races. **CARA** races must adhere to these Guidelines.

I. RACE APPLICATIONS, WEBSITES & ONLINE REGISTRATION

CARA is encouraging races to “GO GREEN,” to eliminate paper applications and utilize online registration. Provide an online printable application for runners who wish to use that option.

The elimination of paper applications does not eliminate the obligation to provide runners with complete information about your race.

The website/online registration site should provide the following information:

- **Appropriate CARA logo**
- **Date of race**
- **Start time(s)**
- **Distance(s)**
- **Exact location of start (street address)**
- **USATF course certification status**
- **Access to driving directions**
- **Course description**
- **Parking information**
- **Contact person/phone/email**
- **Full range of shirt sizes: small, medium, large and x-large**
- **Specific advance registration instructions and fees**
- **Race day registration instructions and fees**
- **Age groups for awards**
- **Online sites for race results**
- **CARA promotional statement**
- **Clear statement that bicycles, in-line skates, other wheeled vehicles (except wheelchairs) and dogs are not allowed**

- Clear statement of race’s position on use of baby joggers and strollers in race (see below: V. SAFETY)
- Registration forms include:
 - Full name, address, city, state, zip, phone, age, date of birth, sex and email address
 - Separate check-off for runners and walkers
 - CARA discount***
 - Space for CARA membership number
 - Liability waiver for runners 18 and over; signature of parent or guardian for runners under 18

CARA members should be able to take the CARA discount up to and including the latest online and mail-in cutoff dates. Discounts need not be given for race day registrations.

***The following are CARA’s recommended discounts for CARA members

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| Entry fee of \$24 or less..... | \$3.00 |
| 25 – 29..... | 4.00 |
| 30 – 39..... | 5.00 |
| 40 and over..... | 6.00 |

II. COURSE

- ___ The course must be USATF certified (not the same as sanctioning).
- ___ There is a lead vehicle, with a driver or passenger familiar with the course which will follow the course exactly and remain within general view of front runners.
- ___ A race official will follow the last runner/walker with ability to communicate with race staff.
- ___ Course is clearly marked by direction signs and/or surface paint.
- ___ Each mile point of the race is clearly marked, including mile 3 in a 5k and mile 6 in a 10k.
- ___ A digital clock, or a person calling out split times clearly and accurately is located at miles 1 and 2 of a 5k race and at least every two miles in races longer than 5k to allow a runner to maintain an accurate pace throughout the race.
- ___ The course is closed to all traffic or there is a clearly marked lane for runners. If possible, parking is prohibited on streets designated

for the race course.

_____ Marshals are present at every intersection and change in course direction.

_____ The number of marshals is adequate to ensure that runners can follow the course safely and accurately. Police should not be used as course marshals.

_____ Police or adult volunteers are located at busy intersections to direct traffic.

III. AID STATIONS

_____ Aid stations are located at the race start and finish and at least every 2 ½ miles on the race course, but not at a mile split.

_____ The frequency and stocking of aid stations must be increased beyond standards for warm weather races, for anticipated extreme heat conditions (75+) and for races with large numbers of less experienced runners. We recommend that races research historical weather data for the proposed date of the race to anticipate fluid needs. We suggest that races with more than 3,000 participants are more likely to have a large number of less experienced runners.

_____ A communication system (cell phones or radios) must be in place for communication between selected aid station personnel and race director.

_____ Aid stations must be equipped with an on-course system to communicate with *runners* in the event of an emergency, race stoppage, or adverse weather conditions. Suggested system: 4 signs/flags: green (proceed), yellow (slow down, proceed with caution), red (slow down, consider stopping, follow official instructions), black (stop, event cancelled, follow official instructions).

_____ Enough pre-poured fluids and cups are provided so that the last runner at each station and at the finish line has fluids available.

IV. MEDICAL

- _____ Race must have liability insurance.
- _____ Prior to race, ambulance service must be arranged for and available to the race in case of an emergency. An on-site ambulance is strongly suggested.
- _____ A system must exist for communication between the race personnel on the course (aid stations, course marshals) and race staff, with the capability to summon emergency medical assistance to any place on the race course.
- _____ For minor medical needs, e.g. ice, adhesive bandages, etc., provide a visible location at the finish line with supplies and a qualified provider.

V. SAFETY

- _____ A safety plan must be in place for use of the communication system at all stages of race (when to call, whom to call).
- _____ All course volunteers must be instructed in course of action in event of an emergency.
- _____ See above Aid Stations and Medical sections for further information relating to communication systems.
- _____ Due to safety concerns for infants/children and runners, CARA strongly recommends that baby joggers and strollers not be allowed in races.

If, despite this recommendation, a race permits the entry of baby joggers and strollers, it must:
 - Publicize this fact (some runners will avoid races with baby joggers and strollers)
 - Warn participants of the inherent danger of mixing infants/children in vehicles with competitive runners
 - Insist and enforce that runners with baby joggers and strollers start behind runners
 - Must have race insurance which allows and covers baby joggers and strollers in a race. RRCA (Road Runners Club of America), which provides general liability insurance, offers this statement with regard to

risk management guidelines. (We include it as a point of information.)

“...while activities such as animal events, skateboard events, baby jogger events, roller skate or blade events,.....will not void a club’s insurance coverage, these types of events are strongly discouraged because of the high risk for potential injury which could cause an increase in RRCA insurance premiums, or, even worse, a refusal by the insurance company to renew the RRCA’s liability policy.”

_____ **IF LIGHTNING/THUNDER IS PRESENT, OR OTHER CONDITIONS DEEMED DANGEROUS BY RACE PERSONNEL, THE RACE MAY NOT PROCEED. A race may proceed once the danger of lightning and/or dangerous condition has clearly passed.**

VI. TOILET FACILITIES

_____ **At least one functioning toilet (including indoor toilet facilities) for every 40 runners is located at the race site for races 10 miles or longer or over 1,000 runners. At least one functioning toilet for every 50 runners for all other races.**

VII. GEAR CHECK

_____ **A secure area is clearly designated for runners’ gear, when appropriate. Consider distance to parking and number of runners not traveling by car.**

VIII. RACE DAY REGISTRATION AND PACKET PICKUP

_____ **All runners receive race instructions, medical and aid station information. Course maps should be available: on line, in packets or posted at race.**

_____ **Separate tables or lines are provided for pre-registered runners and for race day entrants.**

_____ **Sufficient volunteers are recruited to handle pre-registered runners, race day registrants and packet pick-up in a timely manner on race day.**

_____ If team competition is available, separate tables or lines are provided for team registration.

_____ If Clydesdale (weight) competition is available, separate tables/lines and weigh-in station are provided for Clydesdales.

_____ Race day registration closes at least fifteen minutes prior to the start of the race.

IX. START

_____ The starting line is clearly marked on the ground by tape, paint, or chalk.

_____ A false start line is designated, behind the real start line (except in electronically timed races).

_____ Sound system is utilized which ensures that all runners can hear pre-race instructions and the starting gun or horn.

_____ Since runners have already done their warm ups, speeches by dignitaries, physicians, entertainers, sponsors, etc. and any other ceremonies should be conducted before runners gather at the start line.

_____ To avoid false starts, the method of starting is explained. A countdown is not used within 30 seconds of the start.

_____ Reminder announcement to be made regarding use of flag/sign runner warning system.

_____ Where race does prohibit them, a reminder announcement is made prior to start about prohibition of baby joggers and strollers, bicycles, in-line skates, roller skates, scooters, other wheeled vehicles (except wheelchairs), or dogs.

_____ Walkers and runners do not start simultaneously. Walkers are instructed to line up behind runners and have a separate, later start.

_____ A system is in place which ensures faster runners are positioned in front of all other runners at the start; and all other runners are positioned in accordance with their expected finishing time, with the slowest runners at the back.

- _____ The start and finish areas are kept clear of non-participants.
- _____ Race is started exactly at the advertised time, even if people are still waiting to register or pick up packets.
- _____ The first 200 meters of the race maintain a constant width so that runners are not funneled together.

X FINISH

- _____ The finish line is clearly marked on the ground by tape, paint, or chalk.
- _____ A digital clock is provided at the finish line to display runners' finish times.
- _____ Adequate means are provided to ensure accurate timing of each finisher.
- _____ The number of finish chutes is adequate so no one is ever backed up in front of the finish line.
- _____ Runners and walkers should have separate chutes if the events are separate.
- _____ Race results/chip retrieval locations must be situated at a distance from end of chutes to avoid backup in the chutes.
- _____ Manual backup of automated and computerized results, as well as a backup chronomix, is required for verification of the timing system (except in electronically timed races).

XI. RESULTS/AWARDS

- _____ Clock time or electronically attained times may be used for determining overall and age group winners, according to which form the race uses in publishing its official results. However, state and national records must be clock-timed, according to USATF rules.
- _____ The top male and female finishers overall should be recognized and awarded.

_____ Awards are to be given to the first three finishers in each age group. For the purpose of determining age group awards, overall winners are removed from the results and do not receive age group awards. Overall winners are included in age group results for final reporting purposes.

_____ If awards are not distributed or available on race day, they must be mailed to all winners in a timely fashion, at no cost to the runners.

_____ CARA Runners' Choice Circuit Races must use five year age groups for awards.

_____ CARA recommended age groups for Certified Races are as follows: Male and female – 14 & under, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80 and over. (These age groups may be combined but not divided.)

(Runners have a decided preference for 5 year age groups.)

XII. POST RACE

_____ Submit (or instruct results person/company to submit) one copy of age group and overall results directly to CARA (brian@cararuns.org) within 24 hours of the race. Use Word Pad or html, if possible. Include name, age, sex, hometown, finishing time, overall place, and age group place for all participants. Include overall winners in age group results.

XIII. MISCELLANEOUS

_____ Race will have an email system whereby it can communicate with registered runners both prior to and after a race in the event of race cancellation, scoring issues, CARA post-race survey, etc.

_____ Race must participate in CARA post-race online survey.

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