



SPARKY THE FIRE DOG CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL VISIT PLANNING GUIDE



HOSPITAL VISITS FOR NATIONAL INJURY PREVENTION DAY (NOVEMBER)

Planning a visit to a children's hospital with Sparky the Fire Dog® is a meaningful way to deliver fire and life safety education while delivering smiles to patients, their families, and hospital staff. Whether you're coordinating your first visit or enhancing a returning one, this guide can help.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- **Contact the Hospital:** Connect with the hospital's injury prevention coordinator or burn center manager as a starting point.

Alternatively, consider other contacts such as:

- Child life specialists
- Recreational therapists
- Children's activity coordinators
- Nursing education staff
- Volunteer services
- Hospital school contacts

Finding the right entry point into the hospital is vital to success. Don't give up if your first attempt doesn't receive a response. When reaching out to new contacts, be transparent about your efforts. Stay flexible and persistent as you work to identify the best contact.

- **Plan Ahead:** Schedule the visit at least **1 month in advance**. Be sure to ask about:
 - Quiet hours
 - Restricted visitation areas (e.g., infection control units)
 - Therapy schedules (e.g., recurring physical or occupational therapy times)
 - Competing events
- **Staffing Needs:**
 - At least two fire department personnel are required:
 - One to wear the Sparky® costume
 - One to serve as a reader and a guide for Sparky
 - A hospital contact to serve as a guide and, depending on hospital policy, assist with photo permissions and logistics
- **Costume:** Ensure an official licensed Sparky costume is available and assign a designated wearer. Download and review the [Sparky the Fire Dog Costume Guidelines](#).

EVENT ACTIVITIES

- **Walkthrough Tour:**
 - Consider starting the visit with a walking tour through the hospital units before the read-aloud event. This approach helps build excitement and awareness.
 - Sparky can greet patients, families, and staff. Word of mouth spreads quickly and boosts turnout for the read-aloud event.
- **Read-Aloud Session:**
 - Have the hospital contact secure a location that is easy to access for families.
 - Use *The Story of Sparky the Fire Dog* book for storytelling. [Digital version and a lesson plan available here](#).

- Sparky should engage with the story, acting out certain parts and greeting kids with a high-five or hug at the end of the story.
- **Patient Interaction:**
 - If visiting patient rooms, ask permission first and inquire about any rules for the room visits.
 - Engage in activities in the playroom if you are allowed to visit that room.
- **Giveaways:**
 - Hand out coloring books, coloring sheets or activity sheets from [Sparky.org](https://www.sparky.org), or other small gifts (ensure staff and parental approval before distribution). NFPA public education materials are also available for purchase at the [NFPA website](https://www.nfpa.org).
 - In some cases, stickers or tattoos are allowed with prior approval.

EVENT LOGISTICS

- **Duration:** 1–2 hours
- **Group Size:**
 - Storytime is ideal for 10–15 children.
 - Larger groups should be split into smaller groups for better engagement.
 - Ask for a headcount in advance and coordinate with the hospital, but plan on walk-ins as kids find out about this fun activity.
- **Space and Facilities:**
 - Choose a space that is accessible and comfortable for patients.
 - Secure a room for Sparky costume changes.

PROMOTION AND MATERIALS

- **Promotion:**
 - Have the hospital contact share details of the event through emails, internal newsletters, and flyers.
 - Ask the hospital contact about posting flyers in nurse stations, family waiting rooms, playrooms, and elevators.
 - For broader promotion of the event, loop in the hospital's communications or public relations team to coordinate internal social media posts or coverage before and after the event.
- **Promotional Flyer:** Use the pre-designed and ready to print flyer to make promotion easier.
- **Materials:**
 - Email materials to the hospital contact in advance if the hospital can print them or print at the fire station (coloring pages, fire safety handouts).
 - Leave extra materials behind in nurse stations or patient rooms, if allowed.
- **Photo Consent:** Inquire about photo consent forms from the hospital. Encourage photo consent forms to be completed ahead of the Sparky visit. Always ask before taking photos and follow the hospital's photo consent policy.

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

- **Language Needs:**
 - Determine if bilingual support or translation services are needed.
 - Provide translated materials as necessary.
- **Hospital Staff and Parent Engagement:** The Sparky visit should be widely communicated within the hospital to maximize engagement.



For free printables and resources to help with the visit, go to [Sparky.org](https://www.sparky.org) and [Sparkyschoolhouse.org](https://www.sparkyschoolhouse.org).



**PUBLIC
EDUCATION**