



# AMA-MSS COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT IDEA BOOK

Updated 2021



Welcome! The American Medical Association Medical Student Section’s Community Service Project Idea Book is designed to help your school organize community service events to encourage medical students to become more integrated with their communities. Projects can receive funding from the AMA through the Section Involvement Grant program through MSOP. This booklet offers information on planning various types of activities, applying for section involvement grants, and involving the press and local media to advertise your event.

This project book was put together by the Community Service Committee 2021-2022.

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## **AMA Medical Student Section National Service Project 2020–2022**

Each Local Campus Section is encouraged to organize at least one National Service Project (NSP) event each academic year. Follow the tips below to plan a great NSP event. Every two years, the AMA-MSS selects a National Service Project theme around which to focus its community service activities. The NSP theme this year is Addressing Social Determinants of Health.

### **Addressing Social Determinants of Health**

The current NSP theme, Addressing Social Determinants of Health, highlights the inequities exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic including mental health, environmental impact on human health, access to healthy foods, and voting access. These are persistent issues impacting communities that detrimentally impact health in measurable ways. For example, diseases such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and obesity disproportionately impact minority communities and can be traced to a community’s access to resources and information to ameliorate factors predisposing these diseases. With the understanding that healthcare delivered in healthcare settings only account for approximately 20% of one’s health, physicians should look to additional factors that impact one’s health. Students are in a unique position to identify and build lasting changes within the local community. These projects can improve a medical school’s impact on a community long before the “MD” or “DO” is added to the end of a student’s name.

## **Introduction to the AMA “Addressing Social Determinants of Health” initiative**

Committed to answering the national imperative that highlights how a community’s ZIP code plays a role in the health outcomes of its residents, the AMA, through the “Addressing the Social Determinants of Health” initiative, strives to inform medical students and community members of the impact of social factors on healthcare and bridge the gap between the resources available to address these factors and the communities themselves.

Through its initiative, the AMA is working with local partners and national organizations to significantly impact communities with social factors such as food security, mental health access, early childhood development, environmental protection, and voting access.

Please see the template on the next page to use as a template for initiatives.

We invite you to learn about [“7 terms doctors should know about social determinants of health.”](#)



Community Service Committee

## Guidelines for successful project planning

You are taking the first step toward choosing, planning, and implementing a successful project by reading the information contained in this guide. Before deciding on a course of action, here are a few things you'll want to consider:

- Determine a comfortable level of involvement. Not every effort has to be a multi-phased program. Even the smallest funds, expertise, or resources can have a large impact.
- Assess community needs. Because the time and resources of you and your fellow AMA-MSS members are extremely valuable, your next step in planning is to determine what issues need to be addressed. Besides considering your community needs, you will also want to consider what other groups are doing, and how you can fill in gaps and/or support the services that exist in your community.
- Target your audience. For projects geared toward awareness or education, think about how to reach your audience most effectively. Information posted in public places, healthcare settings, schools, or through local/social media can be effective.
- Consider contacting local healthcare professional organizations – they may be interested in collaborating and providing additional volunteers for experience serving the public.
- With recent times forcing many in-person events to go online, please feel free to adjust these events to best fit into your communities.

This book categorizes events into 3 categories:

1. **National Service Project events** – These must focus on the AMA's current NSP theme. For 2020–2022, “Addressing Social Determinants of Health” is the theme that your event must support. This program emphasizes social determinants of health impacting your local community. The AMA-MSS has many [policies](#) that address topics your Local Campus Section may be interested in addressing. We encourage you to review these for inspiration.  
**Examples:** Provide health screenings in the local community, helping communities vote, volunteering time at local organizations, connecting communities to local resources, cleaning pollution in an area, or developing healthy habits in children.
2. **Education events** – These events focus on educating the community on a topic.  
**Examples:** Health coaching, panel discussion with experts, movie screening
3. **Events directed toward members** – Events designed for Local Campus Sections and members (e.g., recruitment), can be helpful in building a local chapter.  
**Examples:** Specialty-speed dating, how to have success in medical school

**Funding:** Section Involvement Grants (up to \$1,000) can help fund your event or service. Events are divided into three categories: Recruitment, Engagement, and COVID-19 Relief Efforts. Due to the changing funding priorities, it will be important to find the most up-to-date application and goals of the grant [here](#) to optimize funding outcome.

**Note: Any use of the AMA logo must be approved by the AMA by contacting the Director of the MSS, Shane McGoey, PhD at [shane.mcgoey@ama-assn.org](mailto:shane.mcgoey@ama-assn.org).**

You can contact [MSSIG@ama-assn.org](mailto:MSSIG@ama-assn.org) for any questions about the Section Involvement Grants program.

The AMA-MSS has a [Facebook page](#) where you can promote your event before and after. In addition, consider sharing the event within your respective Region Facebook page or group messaging service.

Example of template content:

<Medical school>

AMA student section

# Join us!

<Event title>

<Date>

<Time>

<Location>

<Additional information>

Join your fellow medical students and learn why more than 55,000 are members of the **American Medical Association!**



# National Service Project: Event examples

## Title: Volunteering with Local Organizations

### Description

Medical schools are often situated in communities where there are many non-profits that can utilize reliable volunteers to further their mission. Sometimes, the best impact-to-effort ratio is partnering with existing programs to help them reach their goals. We recommend using Google to identify existing nonprofits, community service, and/or charity organizations that serve your local region and reaching out to see if they can use additional hands.

### Target audience

Varies

### Venue

Varies

### MSS Examples

In 2021, members from the AMA-MSS Local Campus Section at the University of Nebraska Medical Center volunteered with Community Alliance to help clean up their offices. Community Alliance provides psychiatric, mental health, and substance use counseling to support the community. In addition, they advocate at the local, state, and national levels to establish services and policies to overcome the challenges in mental health. This event helped the Local Campus Section build rapport with the community organization with the goal of finding additional opportunities in the future to volunteer on the advocacy front.



In 2020-21 members from the AMA-MSS Local Campus Section at the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Rockford joined forces with the local Medical Reserve Corps to help contact trace, vaccinate, and educate the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Medical Reserve Corps exists in many localities where medical personnel help local government coordinate an organized response to crises. The Local Campus Section members have donated thousands of hours of service to date.

In 2020, members from the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in El Paso chapter worked with RotaCare, the student-run free clinic, to help convert their in-person services to telehealth. Students answered questions from patients regarding medical concerns, medication refills, questions about the COVID-19, and wellness checks on patients totaling 254 encounters. In addition, students put on a free drive-through influenza vaccine drive partnering with the City of El Paso. This student run clinic has been operational since 2014 and is made possible with following community partners: Rotary Club of El Paso, El Paso County Medical Society, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center faculty, and Texas School Nurses Association El Paso.



## **Title: Care Packages**

### **Description**

Assemble groups of items collected through donations or purchases that a targeted population can utilize. Be sure to prioritize the needs of a population and their ability to utilize the items over the convenience of purchasing cheap or low-quality items.

### **Target audience**

Varies

### **Venue**

Assembly of care packages can occur in a group or individual setting, depending on availability and convenience.

### **MSS Example**

In 2021, the AMA-MSS Local Campus Section at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) created Disaster Relief Care Packages to provide vulnerable populations residing around the UTRGV School of Medicine resources and education to help them be better prepared for the next natural disaster. 20 packages were made with \$500. These packages contained a draw string bag filled with Ready America 3000 Survival Box, hand warmers, socks, lip balm, body wipes, and face masks. The package also had a fill-in-the-blank document for all essential emergency resources including: a list of nearby shelters, food banks, family emergency contacts, and past medical history lists. While the impetus for this project were the winter storms, there is now a long-term goal of a continued presence at local AHEC facilities. Funding: Texas Medical Association, AMA SIG.

In December of 2020, the AMA-MSS Local Campus Section at Florida State University created Christmas baskets tailored to the needs of their community. These contained gift items such as Christmas socks, toys, and books and necessities such as face masks, hand sanitizers, toiletries, and COVID-19 related literature. They created 25 children's baskets and 24 adults' baskets in two 2-hour sessions. The project took about 1 month to plan, organize, and complete with planning beginning in mid-November and basket deliveries occurring one week before Christmas. Tips they included: For seamless delivery, mark each package with the name of the resident and their address and organize each basket in the order that they will be delivered.



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## **Title: Community health screening**

### **Description**

Provide community health screenings to the community—taking blood pressure, glucose checks, vision checks, and checking weight and BMI. Plan on working with local primary care physicians who can help by providing their expertise and assistance.

### **Target audience**

Individuals over the age of 60

### **Venue**

This event could be held at independent living communities or other community centers that serve an elderly population. A local grocery store or mall may also be a good location.

## **Title: Healthy Halloween carnival**

### **Description**

Halloween is often centered on candy, so promote healthier alternatives by providing fruits, vegetables, drinks, and snacks that have more nutritional value for the children. Holding a candy-free event can help emphasize healthy choices in pediatric populations. In addition, an educational component can be included as feasible to further emphasize healthy choices. We recommend that this event contain booths for with crafts, games, face painting, costume competitions, and prizes supervised by students. Members of the Local Campus Section are encouraged to play key roles in the planning, decorating, and participation prior to and during the carnival. Non-members are also encouraged to participate as this is promoted as a school-wide event. Many students often think of the American Medical Association as solely a political organization and are unaware of its vast reach into community work—this event will hopefully shed light on the many strengths of the organization.

This project puts advocacy in action through education and hands-on patient outreach. Collaboration with other student groups and the fun holiday theme will attract the attention of both student volunteers and the media who are eager to participate, thus providing great publicity for participating organizations.

### **Target audience**

Pediatric populations w/ and w/o diabetes

### **Venue**

Children's hospital, community center, local school

### **Examples in the MSS**

Annually, the members of the University of Illinois College of Medicine, Rockford set up a Healthy Halloween to provide a healthy alternative to trick-or-treating for local kids up to 5<sup>th</sup> grade. They host the event at the college of medicine. There are opportunities for children to play games, win prizes, paint, sculpt, and other tactile activities for their entertainment. The goal to separate the abundant consumption of candy from Halloween.



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## **Title: Geriatric outreach**

### **Description**

The geriatric outreach program aims to promote healthy behaviors and lifestyles in aging populations to reduce the impact of chronic disease processes and loneliness. This event can be put together in several ways. One way is to have stations where participants can talk with each set of medical students/physicians about a subject pertinent to the participant (such as diabetes or cardiovascular health). Other ideas include memory games and nutrition. Alternatively, students could partner with local groups to have phone calls with interest participants.

### **Target audience**

Individuals over the age of 60

### **Venue**

This event could be held at independent living communities or other community centers that serve an elderly population.

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## **Title: Virtual Race Fundraiser**

### **Description**

Virtual races allow for a unique fundraising platform which allow individuals to support causes while engaging in physical activity together across distances. One must identify a cause and, if applicable, related organizations for which monetary funds could be collected to further awareness and/or research surrounding the cause. The event should be promoted via different avenues such as email, flyers, and social media. A set dollar amount should be charged per participant or group and a method provided by which participants' activity can be tracked. Additionally, gear can be made available during registration to further expand fundraising efforts.

### **Target audience**

Varies

### **Venue**

Virtual

### **MSS Example**

In 2021, members of the AMA-MSS Local Campus Section at Michigan State University hosted a virtual race (1K/5K/10K per participant's choice) to raise funds and bring awareness to local organizations providing aid during the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, this event promoted physical activity and a sense of community during a time when individuals had become rather sedentary and needed to socially

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distance.

## **Title: Virtual Outreach Campaign**

### **Description**

Social media and the internet are the most common places people receive information. To that end, the Community Service Committee has put together information fliers with the goal of highlighting the Social Determinants of Health and ways students can address them. Topics range from environmental protection, voting access, chronic disease prevention, mental health, and early childhood development.

### **Target audience**

Medical students

### **Venue**

Virtual

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## **Educational: Event examples**

### **Title: Health coaches**

#### **Description**

A program in which medical students and Residents partner with local high schools to teach interested high school students how to coach someone with modifiable risk factors to live more healthy. Topics should be population specific but can range from hypertension, diabetes, prediabetes, smoking, alcohol consumption, or obesity. Medical students and residents will lead afterschool sessions to teach interested students to coach a family or friends on the identified topics. We recommend this be a longitudinal project ranging several weeks – months.

#### **Target audience**

Interested high school students

#### **Venue**

Local school, online

Tip: Incorporate motivational interviewing into the event by using informational materials on healthy diet, physical activity and lifestyle change programs available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the American Medical Association.

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### **Title: Online Educational Seminar**

#### **Description**

An online educational seminar allows for disseminating relevant information, gauging interest surrounding a specific subject matter, and cultivating the knowledge base of the intended audience. This platform could be useful for bringing expertise to individuals so that they may obtain reliable information to educate themselves on topics that are pertinent and/or of interest to them.

#### **Target audience**

Varies

#### **Venue**

Online platforms including Zoom, WebEx, etc.

## **Title: Pediatric health fair**

### **Description**

Make sure your topics are age-appropriate for the population you are targeting and try to make stations as interactive as possible to keep the kids engaged. Some ideas for stations at a pediatric health fair are:

- ❑ **Healthy hand hygiene**—using a product that glows under a black light gives students a great visual to show the importance of proper hand washing
- ❑ **Safety** information on correct car seat, seat belt and bicycle helmet use
- ❑ **Risky behavior avoidance**—education on the harmful effects of smoking, alcohol abuse and not using sunscreen; “Tar Wars” is a national program with a curriculum filled with ideas on interactive ways to discuss tobacco use with children: [aafp.org/patient-care/public-health/tobacco-cessation/tar-wars.html](http://aafp.org/patient-care/public-health/tobacco-cessation/tar-wars.html)
- ❑ **Asthma awareness**—discussing triggers, demonstrating how to use an inhaler
- ❑ **Nutrition**—healthy meal and snack examples; visual demo comparing the amount of sugar in juices, sodas, chocolate milk, water; or build-your-own plate for healthy portions (MyPlate)
- ❑ **Exercise booth**—keep things fun with dancing, yoga, outside activities

### **Target audience**

Children, can be tailored to a variety of age groups

### **Venue**

Local school, afterschool program or community organization

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## **Title: Adolescent outreach program on vaping**

### **Description**

With the concomitant popularity of vaping and existing myths suggesting vaping is not as harmful as smoking, there is a need for education on vaping among adolescents.

- ❑ Educate teenagers on the dangers of vaping
- ❑ Give examples of the dangers of vaping (lung disease); discuss how long-term lung damage can lead to complications and cause a decline in quality of life
- ❑ Provide accessible and accurate resources such as:  
[https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html](https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/Quick-Facts-on-the-Risks-of-E-cigarettes-for-Kids-Teens-and-Young-Adults.html).

### **Target audience**

Teenagers/adolescents in your local community

### **Venue**

Local high school or other facilities that are easily accessible to adolescents

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## **Title: Youth Nutrition and Exercise Programming**

### **Description**

Childhood obesity continues to be a serious public health concern in the United States. By collaborating with elementary and middle schools, medical students can teach local children the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle while they are young. Lead a health lesson every other week, focusing on a different aspect of health. Consider expanding the curriculum across several classes or across several schools in your region and give a *Healthiest Class Award* to add a competitive element.

Here are some ideas and tips for lesson topics:

- **Exercise and fitness**
  - If you decide to employ “Counting Our Steps” competition, pass out pedometers
  - Consider having the lesson outside to encourage active learning
- **Nutrition for a healthy, balanced diet**
  - Use My Plate as a guide ([myplate.gov](http://myplate.gov))
  - Consider including a how-to-make-a-healthy-breakfast workshop
- **Sports physicals** with the involvement of local physicians/medical personnel—i.e., heart, lung, and eye exams (be sure to have physical evaluation sheets the physicians can sign as well as different sized blood pressure cuffs if you’ll be talking to older/bigger kids)
- **Street-smart habits**
  - Educate students how to exercise safely—e.g., wearing helmets, using sidewalks, urban environment considerations, etc. (This type of awareness-building is especially important in urban communities.)
  - Collaborating with public health and safety officials (gym trainers, police officers, community guards, etc.) can shed light on this complex topic
- **Field day**
  - Collaborate with a local gym or sports team to show children how to put what they learned in the classroom into practice in real life

### **Target audience**

Children in the community—collaboration with a local elementary or middle school (Consider hosting an event after school so parents and caregivers can attend too.)

### **Venue**

School classroom for lessons; medical school or any other large, community-accessible facility for weekend events, including a park or other safe outdoor environment (optional)

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## Events for members: Event examples

### **Title: Step into Step 1**

#### **Description**

This event will be a panel discussion where four to six M3s and M4s will reflect on their experience with Step 1 for the benefit of M1s and M2s. This is an event that is easy to organize and very much needed by our student body, and it is quite appropriate that the AMA deliver such an opportunity. This will provide a relevant event to medical students, thereby filling a void and attracting members to appreciate the many resources of the AMA.

#### **Target Audience**

First- and second-year medical students

#### **Venue**

On-campus

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### **Title: Skills lab**

#### **Description**

The *skills lab* will allow first- and second-year students to learn the skills of suturing, intubation, drawing blood, and starting an intravenous access line. In addition, students will see how a cricothyroidotomy is done. Reach out to area physicians who are experts to sign up to teach students these skills. This can be a great event for students to meet area physicians outside of the hospital and prepare them for their clinical rotations. At the beginning of the event, a section representative will briefly talk about the AMA and how to join.

#### **Target Audience**

First- and second-year medical students

#### **Venue**

On-campus

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### **Title: Physician Leader Panel**

#### **Description**

The physician leader panel is intended to expose members to physician leaders who have had a hand in shaping medical policy and who have a record of contributing to the betterment of the profession and patients. Physicians are invited to speak about their experiences, influences, and where they see the medical profession moving in the future. An informal question-and-answer session is recommended at the end.

Questions to consider include: When I get involved, how can I make a difference outside of the classroom? What helped them get to where they are today? Was there anything in medical school that influenced your development?

#### **Target audience**

First- and second-year medical students

#### **Venue**

On-campus

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## **Title: GME letter writing campaign**

### **Description**

An important focus of the AMA-MSS is the SaveGME campaign, which features grassroots-level letter writing campaign springing from students of the nation's medical schools. The letters (pre-drafted letters from the [SaveGME.org](http://SaveGME.org) website) will be from medical students detailing the economic numbers and its emotional appeal. The letters will be printed out so everyone associated with the medical school can sign, then the letters will be mailed to local members of Congress. Members of Congress have a voice on the House Ways and Means Committee, a committee that can affect change with the proposed \$11 billion GME funding cuts. This is an easy way to get medical students exposed to advocacy.

### **Target audience**

Medical school campus and members of Congress

### **Venue**

On-campus

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## **Title: AMA—from student to physician**

### **Description**

One of the distinguishing factors about the AMA is that you can join as a medical student, stay active as a resident, and continue your involvement all the way through your career as a physician. This event is designed to connect medical students with members of the Residents and Fellows section and Young Physicians section. Members should talk about how the AMA has affected their career. Since this is a more intimate event, we recommend this discussion to take place over some type of meal.

### **Target audience**

Since this event applies to medical students. Non-members will learn about the various ways they can begin to get involved and the benefits of AMA membership.

### **Venue**

On-campus

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## **Title: Orientation week recruitment dinner**

### **Description**

This event should be held on the first night of orientation week for the incoming first-year medical students. Students will be served dinner and beverages at the county medical society, where they will have the opportunity to register for the AMA and medical society memberships. At this event, the benefits of an AMA membership will be described to them by the section's AMA Medical Student Section Outreach Program (MSSOP) Recruiter, and they will be provided with promotional materials provided by the AMA if they become a member. It is effective to hold this event before the school's orientation fair, to impact recruitment more positively.

### **Target audience**

Incoming medical students (M1s) or students who are not aware of the AMA

### **Venue**

On-campus or medical society

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## **Title: “Learn more about your medical school” scavenger hunt**

### **Description**

A scavenger hunt will be organized for the incoming first-year medical students during their orientation week. The purpose of the event will be to: recruit new members, advertise the organization, and better assimilate the new student body with the medical school community. Students should be divided into teams and complete a variety of tasks in a specific time frame. Some of the tasks could include: take a picture of your team with the dean; figure out which year was the school founded; and create other questions based on information about the AMA.

### **Target audience**

M1s and M2s (plan to hold this event during your school’s orientation week program)

### **Venue**

On-campus

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## **Title: AMA specialty speed dating**

### **Description**

Based on a speed dating format, this AMA event is designed to engage pre-clinical students by providing a quick overview of many different specialties to keep in mind as they head clinical rotations. We recommend attending physicians representing a wide range of specialties—from radiology to internal medicine to surgery—to be invited to meet with students in a rotating speed-dating structure. Students will have the opportunity to engage with physicians for five minutes at a time to gain a quick glimpse into each field, exchange personal information, and get pertinent questions about each specialty answered.

### **Target audience**

Preclinical students and any other interested students

### **Venue**

On-campus or in a local establishment

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## **Title: How to succeed in medical school**

### **Description**

Invite first- and second-year medical students to come together for a panel discussion or dinner to learn about the AMA and hear tips to follow in medical school from their peers. Plan on having the participants break into small groups so that individual students can talk with each other and learn tips and suggestions for mastering their first year.

### **Target audience**

M1s and M2s

### **Venue**

On-campus