

Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic

First Aid for Ailing Toys

Under crisis conditions, the forbidding equipment and intense pace of an emergency department can be overwhelming to small children. It even scares most adults. So the Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic is designed to let children and their parents see EMS personnel “operate” in a less critical setting.

Children bring their broken teddy bears and dolls to the hospital (though not the emergency department) and watch as EMS specialists and volunteers repair the toys and restore them to health. It’s amazing how many of them pull through. While there, they get their own vital signs taken and get a first-hand look at what’s it’s like to be in the hospital.

How to put on the program

1. To get the greatest attendance by school children, set the date for this day-long clinic on a Saturday.
2. Coordinate the program with your hospital’s public or community relations department, and notify the media and children in your service area.
3. Recruit volunteer “toy doctors” to help repair the teddy bears and dolls. Ask members of the prehospital care system to participate. Many of them will have the skills necessary to repair torn or broken teddy bears or dolls. Make arrangements for an ambulance to be brought to the clinic for children to tour.
4. Locate a good place in your hospital, clinic, or community to hold the event. An auditorium or lecture hall can be arranged to look like an operating room. Consider bringing in some equipment from the emergency department for the children to see. Be sure there is plenty of parking available for the event.
5. About two months before the clinic, ask your hospital or clinic newsletter editor to announce the event to employees and volunteers. In the article, ask employees and volunteers to loan teddy bears and dolls to be used for display. To set the atmosphere, dress up the bears and dolls, with splints, casts, bandages, and sutures. Take an x-ray of a teddy bear with a simulated swallowed coin for children to see on a view box at the clinic.
6. Ask pharmaceutical representatives or health associations for literature you can give the children and parents on first aid, health, and safety.

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7. Recruit plenty of personnel. In addition to the “toy doctors” assign EMS personnel to staff an ambulance for tours, volunteers to register the children and their dolls and teddy bears and record children’s height and weight. You’ll also need people to demonstrate equipment, answer questions, check children’s vital signs and explain procedures.
8. Ask teachers to call kindergartens and day care centers, and elementary school principals to send invitations to the Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic home with the children (see sample invitation).
9. A week before the clinic, meet with everyone involved to be sure each person knows what to do. Ask that everyone be in uniform (if possible). Get together all the materials you’ll need: teddy bears, dolls, splints, sutures, casts, x-ray of teddy bear, sphygmomanometers, stethoscopes, tongue depressors, scales with height measurements, balloons for decorating, giveaway items, and, of course, the patching materials for teddy bears and dolls, including buttons, needs, and thread. On the day of event, put up signs telling the participants where to park and also where to go.
10. Take black and white photos during the clinic for publicity purposes. Be sure you get the correct names of the people in the photos and stories. Have the children’s parents sign photo release forms giving permission to use the photos, and names.

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Sample Media Memo for Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic

(Your Logo)

MEDIA MEMO

- WHAT:** A Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic where children can get their broken bears and dolls fixed while learning about what it's like to receive treatment in a hospital emergency department
- WHEN:** (day, date, and hours)
- WHERE:** Location you selected
- WHO:** Emergency medical personnel from (your hospital/clinic) plus staff and volunteers will show children and their parents how an EMS team does its work and what to expect in an emergency situation.
- WHY:** Children *and* adults are usually terrified in an emergency situation, often because they do not know what to expect. The Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic is a community service for children and their parents.

NOTE TO PHOTO ASSIGNMENT EDITOR: You'll find some wonderful photo opportunities here because the children, emergency department personnel, and volunteers will be working with the teddy bears and dolls. The children will give their dolls blood pressure checks and will use mock syringes to give their teddy bears and dolls "shots."

For additional information, call: (contact name, hospital, and phone number).

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Sample 30-Second Radio Spot of Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic

(Your Logo)

Teddy Bear Clinic

30-Second Announcement

Young children can be terrified in an emergency. But they can learn what to expect by visiting the (your hospital/clinic or service name) Teddy Bears and Doll Clinic, this (day, date, from hours). Children bring their broken teddy bears and dolls, and emergency medical personnel will fix them while talking to the kids about what happens in a medical emergency, It's all great fun. For more information call (name and/or telephone number)

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Sample Invitation

(Your Logo)

WANTED: Sick Teddy Bears and Dolls

The medics, health aides, nurses, and other staff and volunteers at (your hospital/clinic) will mend your torn and broken teddy bears and dolls, and give you and your parents a chance to learn what happens in an emergency. See you on (day, date) from (hours) at the Teddy Bear and Doll Clinic.

You'll get special cards with important tips to keep you healthy. Your parents will get Emergency Treatment Authorization forms and you and your parents can see the inside of a real ambulance! Meanwhile, your teddy bears will get new noses, eyes, patches, and stitches that will help them look good as new –and feel that way, too!

Ask your parents to enter the hospital/clinic from the (location) entrance. For more information, call (name) at (telephone number). We hope to see you there!

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