



FAQs

1. What is Walk Michigan?

The Michigan Recreation and Park Association (mParks) Walk Michigan Program is a community-based outdoor physical activity and social support program designed for Michigan adults and seniors. Walk Michigan is a flexible and adaptable program that can be implemented in any community, regardless of staffing, resources or other barriers that often exist with programs. Using the Walk Michigan leader guidebook and participant guidebook, both individual and group formats are set up as a structured eight-week walking program. The daily step count goal for participants is 8,000 steps per day, five days per week over the eight-week program, which will virtually allow participants to successfully walk the Iron Belle Trail. While walking is the central activity, Walk Michigan is a multi-component program that also includes stretching and strengthening assessments and exercises, good walking form principles, safety tips, and motivational strategies to walk outdoors on trails.

Group sessions include a walk leader/guide, pre-walk informational lectures on various walking/health related topics, warm up and cool down and the actual walk.

Participants can opt to walk with a designated group (set up by the walk leader/agency) or walk on their own using the “Participant Guidebook”. Both group and solo participants will track steps and virtually walk the Iron Belle Trail.

Background

Developed in 2017, the Walk Michigan Program strives to teach participants how to safely make physical activity part of their everyday life through a workbook, and the choice of participating in an eight-week group program led by a trained leader or by doing the program on a self-directed basis, using the workbook as a guide. While designed to encourage adults and seniors to use walking as a safe option for physical activity, Walk Michigan is also designed to promote local parks and trails as places to be fit and get active, while building in various metrics, social support and other modalities to reduce isolation.

2. What are the program goals and objectives?

The overall goals of Walk Michigan are threefold:

- To encourage adults and seniors to use their parks and trails to walk for at least 30 minutes (~8,000 steps) five days per week for eight weeks
- To promote education about safe walking principles
- To help participants find safe places to walk, and provide tools, social support and metrics to continue walking.

By the end of the eight-week program, participants will:

- Understand the basics about safe walking principles
- Develop a walking plan to track steps and set goals



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- Use parks, trails and other public spaces to make walking enjoyable
- Learn how to walk safely and comfortably in various weather conditions
- Gather tips, strategies, and resources to help overcome barriers and continue to be physically active
- Learn about other programs and resources that your local parks and recreation facilities offer around physical activity.

3. What is the target population?

Walk Michigan was specifically developed for adults and seniors of all ages, incomes and abilities who want to be more physically active using parks, trails and other public spaces to walk. While the walking portion of the program is appropriate for all ages, the assessments are specific to adults and seniors.

The only pre-requisite of Walk Michigan is the ability for participants to be on their feet for at least 10 minutes without increased pain.

4. What are the basic program components and activities?

The basic program components are:

- Implementation Guidebook (Leaders)
- Participant Guidebook (Participants)

The activities include:

- **Walking**
 - Participants will self-select walking level (basic, intermediate, advanced), each level will correspond to a daily step goal (5 days/week)
 - Both group and individual participants will virtually walk the Iron Belle Trail over the eight-week program
- **Stretching and cool down**
 - Both the individual and group participants are encouraged to do stretching exercises before and after they walk. The Walk Michigan participant guidebook includes directions for stretching and strengthening exercises. The Walk Michigan Implementation Guidebook includes demonstrations of these stretches and exercises.
 - During the group class:
 - Stretching exercises are incorporated into the warm up and cool down (5 minutes each)
 - Strengthening exercises are demonstrated once during the group class and participants are encouraged to do these at home.
- **Assessments**
 - Participants will be asked to complete a series of pre (week 1) and post (week 8) assessments to measure strength and flexibility.



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- The Walk Michigan leader will be trained by mParks to assess participants, while also provided video and written instructions for each assessment.
- **Motivational Tips and Tools**
 - The Walk Michigan Implementation Guidebook and Participant Guidebook includes self-tests, goal setting strategies, step tracking calendar and map to virtually walk the Iron Belle Trail, and motivational tips.
 - The group classes review these tools and encourage their use throughout the program.
 - Individual participants attend during the first week of the program for assessments and program overview, complete the Walk Michigan program on their own and track steps/walk the Iron Belle Trail, and attend during the last week for post assessments and submit final step counts. Individuals are welcome to attend the designated group walking classes at any point.

5. How does it work?

Groups meet for eight weeks for 3 to 5 times per week. Each session lasts about one hour. The length of each session depends on how long your group decides to walk. At the start, some people may only be able to walk 5 to 15 minutes, but the program will help you gradually build up to at least 30 minutes of walking five times a week. The program can be modified to meet the interests and needs of participants, who walk at their own pace (beginner, moderate, advanced).

Each session begins with a brief discussion on a local trail or park of interest to the group. Walk leaders are encouraged to add their own health and wellness related topics to each session or have guest speakers/walkers join the group (i.e, Walk with a Doc). After the discussion, the group will warm up, stretch, walk, cool down, and stretch one last time. Walking with a group is fun, and groups often spend additional time socializing. Each participant will be provided a pedometer with the option to use their own step tracking device, and asked to log their steps and track progress along the Iron Belle Trail. An eight-week calendar for step recording and Iron Belle Trail map will be provided in the Participant Guidebook.

6. What is the recommended class size?

We recommend 12-15 people per group, but you can have multiple groups going at once.

For example, you can offer 3 groups during the same 8-week session – beginner, intermediate, advanced- and each level can have multiple groups as well if you have more than 12-15 people in each group. Just make sure you have a leader available for each group.

7. How is this Walk Michigan different than earlier iterations of mParks Walk Michigan Program?

This version of Walk Michigan focuses on tracking steps, learning good walking form principles, stretching and cool down, and measure progress through pre/post assessments over an eight-week period. Participants can walk as a group or as an individual with the goal of reaching 8,000 steps per day for 5 days/week for 8 weeks, and tracking their progress along the Iron Belle Trail. Similarly, communities can “compete” against each other tracking steps and progress along the Iron Belle Trail.



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8. Are there prizes for Walk Michigan?

No, unlike years prior mParks does not provide prizes or raffles for agencies. However, communities can work with local organizations or internally to provide participants with prizes. For example, free classes for a recreation center or gift cards/discounts to a local sporting store.

9. Do we need to have a certified walk leader?

No, leaders do not have to be certified. Each agency holds their own liability insurance. mParks recommends that each leader is CPR and first aid certified, but this is not a requirement rather a best practice.

10. How do leaders get trained?

mParks will provide all the necessary resources to adequately train each leader, either in person or via a webinar. The training is 1.5 to 2 hours. The Walk Michigan Implementation Guidebook provides an in-depth walk through of the program, including tutorials for the assessments and how to teach basic walking principles. Additionally, mParks is available anytime for technical assistance.

11. What is our risk for liability if someone is injured during a class or walking on their own?

mParks' participant release form is included in each Participants Guidebook and must be returned BEFORE they begin the Walk Michigan program. This protection is designed to minimize risks for mParks, agencies that have signed up as a program co-sponsor, and trained leaders. It is very important that every participant sign and return the release form.

12. Is this program only offered during certain times of the year?

No, Walk Michigan can be offered anytime during the year as well as multiple times throughout the year.

13. How is the program evaluated?

Participants provided a majority of the data that mParks will evaluate post-program, including:

- Step count
- Pre/post assessments
- Survey (5 questions, pre/post)

Walk leaders will also be given a 10-question post-program evaluation.

Given this information, mParks will run analysis on the data provided and return a report on total step count, statistical significance of the program on health and wellness, and participant/leaders outcomes.

14. What are the reporting requirements for implementing agencies (aside from the evaluation level selected)?

Depending on the level of evaluation you request, reporting varies. At minimum, Walk Michigan requires a final report to gather data on impact and best practices. The required one-page report will ask questions regarding:

- Program dates
- Number of participants (including age and gender)



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- Total steps completed over the program period (cumulative)
- Any new partnerships generated by the program (i.e., connecting with a senior center to implement programming, or pre-existing walking groups, etc.)
- Successes & Barriers
- 10-question post-survey for Walk leaders
- Any additional comments

Otherwise, the evaluation level each agency selects will dictate the type of data collection and reporting you will submit to mParks for analysis. Each participant will be provided a step tracking log/diary to record steps and pre/post assessments. Again, depending on the level of evaluation selected, data reporting varies. Below is a snapshot of what each level requires:

Bronze: Each participants' step tracking log

Silver: Tracking logs + pre/post assessment data

Gold: Tracking logs + pre/post assessment + 5 question survey (pre/post)

15. How do I promote the program?

Any way you can! Through your local organization, partners, social media, press releases, word of mouth, etc. Learn where adults and seniors congregate and spread the news! mParks can also provide additional outreach and marketing ideas as well!

16. What are the program costs?

Pricing is based off mParks membership level, and any additional evaluation costs and add-ons.

Sold in packages for 50 participants each, costs for each package include:

- Premier members: \$199
- Basic: \$249
- Non-members: \$299

Evaluation costs:

- Bronze (step count): \$100
- Silver (step count + pre/post assessment): \$250
- Gold (step count + pre/post assessment + additional surveys): \$400

17. I have more than 50 participants. How do I purchase additional packages?

Additional packages are discounted at 25% each.

For example, if you're a Premier Member (\$199) and select the Silver Evaluation (\$250), your total cost is \$449.

With an additional package for 50 participants at a discount of 25%, your cost would be \$336.75 (\$449 *.25).