

# FAQ: Can Your Local Jama'at Host a Blood Drive?



## Abstract

Many local majalis have thought about donating blood as a Khidmat-e-Khalq activity – a blood drive at the local center or organized group visits to a blood donation center – what's actually required and how can your majalis host a blood drive given the typically perceived obstacles in doing so?

## Blood Drive Q & A

1 **Q** How big a Jama'at do we need before we can host a blood drive ourselves?

**A** Typically, a blood collection agency will want at least 30 units of blood collected to consider it worth staff time and resources. Many agencies won't host a drive unless a target of 40 units can be met. The best way to find out is to call a couple of local blood collection agencies in your area.

Note that in trying to reach a goal of 30 units, you will need to aim to have approximately 42-45 confirmed donors as many who show up learn they cannot donate for one reason or another (no matter how much basic pre-screening you do).

2 **Q** We have a small tajneed and the blood mobile is reluctant to come to our masjid. What should we do?

**A** Gather Khuddam on a certain date and drive to the nearest hospital or Red Cross center and donate collectively. Just make sure they know that you are a part of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community.

It is best to call ahead (at least a week) and make confirmed appointments for each donor, especially if trying to donate on weekends. This helps the blood agency in planning as well as ensures your Khuddam have a sense of commitment to donating.

3 **Q** Our local center / masjid is not zoned such that we can host a blood drive. We have the numbers and want to host a blood drive. What should we do?

**A** Organize for a bloodmobile to come to your location if a conventional blood drive on-site is not an option because of space and / or zoning.

As long as you can find a spot to park the bus, you're set. This is probably still difficult to accomplish on a residential street. You may consider a public school nearby, and ask them if you can use their parking lot on a Saturday or Sunday – or even their gymnasium for a conventional indoor blood drive. Something in walking distance from your local center would be ideal. You could then schedule it right after a monthly meeting for example.

You might even consider holding a local meeting that month inside the school whose gymnasium you book, so that people will still be in audio contact with the program going on and no one will feel like they are 'waiting' to donate. Assigned appointment slots are still recommended in this case to maintain order and ensure the maximum number of collected units.

- 4 **Q** We want to host a blood drive, but we don't have the numbers and / or an adequate facility. Can we partner with another organization?

Consider partnering with a nearby church or synagogue. It's a great interfaith gesture. Useful if you have already run interfaith symposiums and have established contacts with other organizations that you wish to strengthen.

This is also a great way for a local non-Muslim congregation to meet members of our Jama'at while everyone is donating blood. There may be some issues here to clear with your Sadr / Qaid, but this could have a multitude of benefits.

- 5 **Q** We are unable to get appointments from the Red Cross. There is a long waiting period before they can send a team or bloodmobile out to our masjid / local center. What should we do?

**A** Make an appointment anyway, however far in the future it is. Eventually, that date will come and you'll have hosted the blood drive. Plus, it gives you time to adequately plan and canvass for sign-ups.

In the interim, organize groups of Khuddam to donate at the local blood donation center together. These appointments are easier to make earlier and you can probably donate a few times this way before your blood drive date comes along.

- 6 **Q** Most of our Khuddam are not eligible for donating blood. What should we do?

**A** Sometimes, ineligibility is temporary, depending on the reason (travel restriction wait periods pass, medication changes etc.). Encourage those donors to review their own eligibility every so often if they are ineligible for temporary reasons / changing conditions.

Note that this shouldn't stop you from getting donors from the pool of Khuddam that *can* donate – even if that means visiting a donation center instead of hosting your own blood drive.

- 7 **Q** We have never organized a blood drive; we're unsure of what to do, there seems to be a reluctance to undertake this, a concern that it is a lot of work which we are not cut out for, etc. What should we do?

**A** If you really want to do *something* than start small with organizing small groups to donate together at the local blood collection center. That takes next to no work at all and you are doing the broader community a service.

Organizing an actual blood drive can take some work, but fortunately many in the Jama'at have done it before and can help you with logistics, promotional materials and someone to talk to about your organizational issues to help coach you through it. If you can push through your initial concerns / reluctance, you'll find that organizing a blood drive will give you and your team an immensely rewarding feeling.

8 **Q** Can I ask *Ansar* and *Lajna* to donate?

**A** You cannot only ask but you *should* stress to them to donate since that is what our beloved Huzur wishes us to do. Most local Jama'at blood drives are coordinated with Lajna – families come to the local center and donate together.

Some majalis even convince their non-Ahmadi friends and neighbors to donate with them.

When reporting collection results to your regional or national Khidmat-e-Khalq office, please include all such donations in the total number as well. This helps us advise other majalis on how successful reaching out can be, and assists with estimating future numbers for planning purposes.

For coordination with Lajna, note that there are several well established options for managing purdah logistics, so don't let such be an impediment to hosting a more inclusive blood drive involving the whole of your local Jama'at.

9 **Q** It's difficult for my Khuddam to get together at one place and then go for a donation. They want to do it separately, independently through their office, work, hospital etc.

**A** While we encourage that Khuddam go as a group, donating independently is still far better than not donating at all. So do encourage your Khuddam to be a part of this noble cause in whatever way they can be.

Also let such Khuddam know that by donating as part of the Jama'at, they can help raise visibility of this noble act within the Community, and thus, encourage others to donate who might not have actively considered it. A donation with one's majalis has effects greater than just one unit of blood.

10 **Q** We find it difficult to coordinate getting a lot of people together in once place at one time to hold a blood drive. What can we do to get around this constraint?

**A** If you have a large enough Jama'at where you run into this problem, that's a blessing! Coordinating is actually not that hard. If you can host a blood drive while some other Jama'at event is going on at your local center, you already have a captive audience of potential donors. If not, you can still set aside a morning or afternoon, book a blood agency to come by in advance and then promote the event within your Jama'at through auxiliary departments.

We have numerous promotional and logistical materials that we can share (boiler plate announcement requests, signs, etc.) that you can use to promote the blood drive. The key thing is getting individual commitments (appointments). One by one, you will fill up your sign-up appointment sheet and people *will* come inshallah, because they have an appointment.

Personal contacts and follow up phone calls have been found to increase the likelihood a person will show up. If you're hosting an all-Jama'at blood drive, a liaison in Lajna should be able to ensure that all Lajna appointment slots are reasonably filled up.

11 **Q** We just did a blood drive 3 months ago. Aren't we done for a while now?

**A** A healthy person can donate every two months (every 56 days to be exact). There are no deleterious side effects if a blood donation is made every two months. Look at it as a *spiritual oil change!*

While it may be ambitious to host a Jama'at blood drive every two months (at least in the immediate future where donating at such a frequency is not yet the norm), between more visible locally hosted blood drives, you can and should still organize groups of Khuddam who will donate blood together every two or three months. Create a schedule / calendar for the year and build awareness. Include both organized trips to the blood collection agency and scheduled blood drives. With an established calendar, it becomes easier for people to participate (and thus, they are more likely to).

12 **Q** My Khuddam are just too scattered and not interested in this at the moment. I cannot get them motivated.

**A** At the end of the day, we are all responsible for ourselves. As a Qaid / Khidmat-e-Khalq nazim, we encourage you to donate yourself. If you have a couple of Amila members and friends who can join you, even better.

Even though you start small, if you are regular, you'll be surprised at how gradually, others will come around and exhibit interest in joining you too, inshallah.