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CARA Road Race Services - Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is a CARA Certified Race?

A: CARA Certified Races are ones which promise to adhere to CARA's Best Practices Guidelines. These Guidelines embody the highest standards for execution of a road race. Races which follow these Guidelines are eligible for certification and promotion by CARA. These Guidelines may be found at www.CARAruns.org, click on "Race" and choose "Race Director Information and Services".

Q: Are there additional requirements to be a CARA Certified Race?

A: Yes, races must have proof of liability insurance, hold an active USATF course certification, provide proof of timely race results, and respond to any serious issues reported to CARA from the event by participants and/or CARA membership. In the spirit of partnership CARA also expects Certified Races to provide CARA members a discounted entry rate and to help promote CARA by providing tent space and including materials in goody bags.

Q: Can a race be CARA Certified if it does not meet all requirements?

A: Races may request exceptions to some requirements. These requests will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Q: What is a CARA Emerging Race?

A: For a race's first year of certification they are endorsed as an "Emerging Race" while they show that they will follow the CARA's Best Practices Guidelines.

Q: What is a CARA Green Race?

A: A Green Race is a CARA Certified Race which also meets various eco-friendly event management practices.

Q: How common are CARA Certified Races?

A: In 2016, 94 races applied for and received CARA Certification ranging from small neighborhood runs to World Class events.

Q: Is there a fee to be a CARA Certified Races?

A: Yes, fees range from \$250 to \$350 depending on the size of the race and events must renew their certification annually.

Q: How does a race apply to be a CARA Certified Race?

A: Complete an online form found at www.CARAruns.org, click on "Race" and choose "Race Director Information and Services". CARA will then follow up with questions as needed.

Q: What is the different between CARA Certification and USATF Certification?

A: CARA's certification is an operational certification promoting quality, safe and well-organized events; while USATF's certification is only a certification that the race course itself is accurately measured.

Q: How does CARA determine if a race follows the Best Practices Guidelines?

A: CARA requires races to provide a standardize survey, created by CARA, to its participants. The CARA Race Committee, Board, Staff and Membership also regularly review and provide feedback on local events. The CARA Race Committee meets monthly to discuss local races as well. The Race Committee is made up of a wide range of runners and race directors from many different local running clubs.

Q: What happens if a race falls short of requirements?

A: CARA discusses the shortcomings and works with the race to determine solutions. Our goal is always to help a race to get better. If a race is willing to get better we will continue to work with it. If the race is not willing to work to improve, or continues to make mistakes, the race will no longer be certified by CARA.

Q: What benefits does CARA provide Certified Races?

A: CARA provides an endorsement with logo to display so participants know the race is CARA Certified, an opportunity for a consultation to discuss how to meet the Best Practices Guidelines, a post-event survey to provide to participants, event promotion and inclusion in CARA awards programs that honor CARA members who participate in Certified Races are some of the benefits.

Q: How do I list my race on CARA's web site?

A: Go to www.CARAruns.org, click on "Race" and choose "Race Director Information and Services". There you will see all of CARA's Road Race Services, including a link to submit your race to CARA's race calendar. Listing your race with CARA is free.

Q: How do I get my race on CARA's Featured Race Calendar?

A: CARA offers additional promotion opportunities to CARA Certified Races, including the opportunity to list your race on CARA's Featured Race Calendar. Local races must typically be CARA Certified to be promoted by CARA.

Q: Does CARA offer additional promotional opportunities for races?

A: Yes, CARA will customize promotion around your needs to help grow your race. Certified Races receive promotional benefits, and CARA offers additional opportunities at below market rate to its Certified Races. Contact alona@cararuns.org for details.

Q: How does a race become a CARA Runners' Choice Circuit Race?

A: In late fall each year the CARA Race Committee reviews and evaluates all CARA Certified race participant surveys. The Race Committee also conducts a survey to CARA membership about local racing. This data is used to choose the schedule of races. Factors that are considered are CARA Certification status, history of successfully meeting CARA's Best Practices Guidelines, date of race, location of race, distance of race, and runner satisfaction with the race. Once the top races are identified the committee works to create a schedule that is runner friendly and includes races that are balanced between the city and the suburbs.

Q: Who competes in the CARA Runners' Choice Circuit Race?

A: Runners of all levels and nearly every major running club in Chicagoland. CARA offers competition from youth to elite and Clydesdale to Club. Circuit Races draw the areas most dedicated racers. Nearly 4,000 runners scored points in the 2015 circuit.

Q: How does CARA encourage local race participation?

A: CARA provided nearly 300 awards, both participation and competitive based, in 2015 to runners who participated in local races. This includes Circuit Awards, Participation Awards Long Distance Awards and the Marathon Incentive Program.

Q: Why is "Road Race Services" important to CARA?

A: CARA was founded in 1978 to work for improvements in the Chicago Marathon (then called the Mayor Daly Marathon). Then CARA's founders stepped up to become the voice of Chicago running. Nearly 40 years later CARA has become the nation's third-largest running club. CARA and the Bank of America Chicago Marathon have become great partners for local running and the Chicago Marathon is one of the World's finest races. CARA remains committed to its roots to promote the CARA's Best Practices Guidelines and help Chicago area runners find the most well operated races in the nation here at home.

Q: Does CARA sponsor local races?

A: CARA typically does not financially sponsor local races. The organization does its best to support local races in many other ways.

Q: How can I stay connected with CARA's Road Race Services?

A: CARA sends out a monthly Race Director Newsletter. Race Directors are automatically added to the newsletter when they take part in any of CARA's services. Other race directors and event professionals may request to be added for free by e-mailing CARA.

CARA BEST PRACTICES GUIDELINES

Adopted: December 1990

Revised: 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2016

The following Best Practices Guidelines have been prepared by the Chicago Area Runners Association (CARA) for Race Directors and race committees to ensure quality, safe and successful races. All CARA Certified Races have agreed to adhere to these Guidelines.

General Guidelines

Permits / Contracts:

Required: Race must secure necessary permits from local municipalities and contracts for event venue.

Insurance:

Required: Hold liability insurance for the event with a minimum coverage of \$1,000,000.

USATF Course Measurement:

Required: Hold race on an accurately measured course has been certified by USATF. The USATF Course Certification must be active and renewed as required by USATF policies.

Prohibited Items:

Required: Should a race allow participation with strollers or baby joggers the race must require those with these to start in the rear of the race, regardless of expected pace. The race may not allow participation with the following: pets, bicycles, in-line skates, roller skates, scooters, and other wheeled vehicles (except wheelchairs and hand cranks used by disabled participants). Participation with pets and or other prohibited items is only appropriate if a separate race and start is held separately from the runner's race. Recommended: The race is strongly encouraged to prohibit participation with strollers and baby joggers due to safety concerns. If wheelchairs or hand cranks are permitted a separate start, prior to runners, is strongly recommended.

Community Notification:

Required: A system must be in place to notify local residents and businesses along the course of the event. Suggested methods include one or more of the following: fliering, yard signs, e-mails, phone calls or drop-ins, etc. Notifications must begin at least seven days prior to the event.

Safety:

Required: Safety must be the primary priority of the race organizer. The race may not start if adequate event staff, volunteer support and or medical support is not present to allow for a safe and successful event or if supplies, equipment and product needed for a safe and successful event has not arrived or if conditions on the course are not safe (weather, civil unrest, etc...) or if an unrelated crisis has overstressed local public safety and or hospitals preventing emergency support for the race if needed.

Competition Rules:

Required: Races must enforce all USATF and RRCA competition rules.

Race Information and Registration Guidelines

Web Site Information:

Required: The race web site must include at minimum: Date of race, Start time(s), Distance(s), Street Address of race location, Course Map, USATF Course Certification Number, Parking information, Contact for Participant Questions (phone and email or online submission form), a clear listing of all fees and deadlines, refund policy, inclement weather policy, information about packet pick-up, race day registration options, awards categories offered, awards and results rules and procedures, direct link to online race results, a clear statement that bicycles, in-line skates, other wheeled vehicles (except wheelchairs and hand cranks) and dogs are not allowed and clear statement of race's position on use of baby joggers and strollers. The date and start time of the race should be easily found on the initial page of the race's web site.

Registration Form:

Required: The race registration form must collect the following from each participant as required fields on the race registration form: first name, last name, sex, age, hometown, state and zip, e-mail address, phone number and an emergency contact person and phone number. Date of Birth must be collected for CARA Circuit races. The race may collect any additional information as desired. If race shares or sells participant contact information with a third party this must be clearly stated in the event waiver.

Cut-Off Time:

Required: Finish line cut-off time or course closure time must be published publically prior to the opening of registration.

Participant Communication:

Required: A system must be in place to communicate with participants by e-mail to provide pre-race information, emergency announcements (weather status, etc..) and post-race communications (results and survey).

Start Line Guidelines

Marking:

Requirements: The start line must be marked at minimum with a visible line (one of the following paint, chalk, tape or timing mats). Recommended: Use of a raised start banner, arch, truss and or sign that may easily be seen from a distance is recommended.

Organization:

Requirements: Event staff or volunteers must be assigned to keep the start area clear of non-participants, participation with prohibited items and potential bandits (E.g. unregistered runners attempting to participate). A system must be in place to line up

participants by expected pace at the start line (either signs and or marshals) and to ensure that, if allowed, participants with strollers and baby joggers are required to line up in the rear of the start corral to ensure that participation with any prohibited items (pets, etc...) is enforced.

Hydration:

Required: At minimum pre-poured cups of water must be available pre-race within close proximity of the start line.
Recommended: In addition to water, it is recommended that pre-poured cups of sports drink be available pre-race within close proximity of the start line.

Start Line Announcements:

Required: A system of amplified sound (PA system preferred, bull horn or similar for smaller events is acceptable) is required to allow for communicating with participants at the start line. Brief and concise instructions should be provided after runners have gathered at the start, but prior to the start time, regarding starting procedures, Event Alert System levels (if system is in use) and instructions and any other critical information participants need to safely and successfully complete the race. The Nation Anthem, dignitary speeches and sponsor recognition should be completed prior to the scheduled start time and start of final instructions. The race start procedure must be explained prior to the start time. No announcements should be made within 30 seconds of the start. Use of continued count downs should be avoided. The start should be signaled with either the firing of a starting pistol, the sounding of a horn or other non-verbal audible signal. Recommended: The additional use of a visual start command by USATF arm signals is recommended to assist those who may be hearing impaired or out of range audible signals.

Start Time:

Required: The race must begin on-time even if participants are still arriving, unless there are safety concerns (weather, traffic, etc...) that require a delayed start. Dignitary or sponsor speeches, National Anthem and performances should be complete well before the scheduled start time.

Initial Start Stretch:

Required: The first 200-meters or 220-yards should remain at least the same width as the start line so runners are not funneled together too abruptly. Recommended: It is recommended that no turns are present prior to 200 meters or 220-yards into the race course.

Course Guidelines

Course Map:

Required: Race must provide participants access to a course map online prior to the event as well as at the event to be displayed either as large scale course map or as multiple printed copies displayed around the event site.

Markers:

Required: Race agrees that each mile mark and each turn will be clearly marked with a highly visible sign that may be seen reasonably from a distance of at least 50 meters prior to the marker.

Splits:

Recommended: Use of display clocks or split time readers or recommended, not required.

Leader:

Required: The race must be led by a lead cyclist or vehicle that is visible to the overall race leader throughout the course at least from the start and until once through the final turn before the finish. Additionally for safety, a vehicle must patrol or trail the last participant of the race with capabilities to pick up and transport participants who are unable to finish. If the course closes prior to the last finisher completing the race, the trail vehicle must direct all remaining participants to move to sidewalks and off roadways if applicable.

Control:

Required: Races must take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of participants while on course including providing police and traffic management services as required by permits and local municipalities. Police and traffic management persons should not be used to direct runners, only to manage traffic and safety on course. Race agrees to place a course marshal to direct participants that is easily distinguishable as a race official at every turn and change of direction and preferably at every intersection. Course marshals may be identified by use of any of the following: volunteer specific clothing/uniform, wearing of a Hi-Viz vest, holding a flag and or a visible sign.

Road Closures:

Required: The race must inform participants of any roadways where traffic may be present. Permits and police and or traffic management services should be in place to control traffic and prevent participants from having to stop for traffic during the race. At minimum all non-residential roadways, any roadways greater than two lanes (i.e. one lane each direction), any roadways with speed limits above 25 MPH, any roadways that have stop lights, any roadways with center painted lines, and any roadways that may experience consistent traffic flow must be closed. If only partial lane closures are occurring or the races runs in the curb lane, the lane/s being used by the course must be separated from traffic flow by cones or similar. Recommended: It is recommended that all roadways used for the course are closed regardless of traffic flow. The course should avoid routes that cross activate railways where the race could be stopped for passing trains.

Aid Station Guidelines

Frequency:

Required: On-course Aid Stations must be present for all races of 5K distance or longer. For a 5K race an aid station should be present at approximately the 1.5 mile mark. For races longer than 5K an aid station must be present approximately every 2.5 miles. Aid stations may be provided more often if desired.

Hydration / Product Supply:

Required: On-course Aid Stations must provide at minimum water pre-poured in paper cups (no plastic or Styrofoam). A minimum amount of product should be available to make available to each participant at least one 3-4 ounce serving of each type of fluid at each aid station. Races held in hot weather conditions should be prepared for higher need. Races in cool weather conditions should not discount the need for fluids. When both water and sports drink are provided each should be provided in a cup of different color or design to distinguish to participants what is being served. Aid Station volunteers should call out what is in each cup when passing out cups. Additionally,

when water and sports drink are being provided tables providing sports drink must precede those providing water. When energy gels or solid food are provided at an aid station these items should be placed prior to fluid tables. Recommended: It is recommended that sports drink be provided in addition to water at each Aid Station. When sports drink is provided an amount at least equal to two-thirds to three-fourths of the required amount of water should be available.

Finish Line Guidelines

Marking:

Required: Race agrees to mark the finish line at minimum with a visible line (paint, chalk, tape or timing mats). Race agrees to have a visible display clock showing finish time at the finish line. The finish line corral should be bordered with fencing or flagging to secure the area to only finishers and event staff / volunteers. Recommended: An overhead sign, arch, truss or similar as well as a sign that is visible from at least 50 meters prior to the finish line is recommended.

Hydration / Food:

Required: Within the rear of the finish line corral, or in a nearby post-race area, race must provide at minimum water, and preferably water and sports drink. Recommended: It is recommended that other basic post-race foods be provided such as bagels, fruit, bars, etc...

Control:

Required: Event staff or volunteers are assigned to keep the finish area clear of non-participants. Timing and results production areas should be kept clear of participants to allow for unobstructed work by event staff to produce results.

Timing, Results Awards Guidelines

System:

Required: Race agrees to produce accurate and timely race results through a computerized results management system. Races with 500 or more finishers must use a chip/rfid timing system. Races with fewer than 500 finishers may use a manual system (pull tags, barcode scanners, etc...) but chip/rfid timing systems are still highly recommended. Races must advertise their timing method prior to registration, including whether the race will produce chip times or only gun times.

Recommended: When chip/rfid timing is in use it is preferred that the race employ use of disposable chips/rfid tags. It is highly recommended that when chip/rfid timing is in use the race implement use of a start line mat/read to allow for chip times, not only gun times.

Back-Up System:

Required: All races agree to have a back-up system in place such as a manual back-up timing method and or a video recording of the finish line that allows for review and recreation of finish results if the primary system should fail. Races must have a generator or back-up battery power for timing equipment and results production.

Race Site Results:

Required: A system must be in place to produce and display full printed or digitally displayed race results at the race site, preferably within no more than 30 minutes of the last finisher. It is permissible for races to avoid posting hard copy results if a

mobile device friendly live results option is available and publicized to participants.

Online Results:

Required: Full results or a direct link to full race results must be posted on the race's web site at least within 24 hours of the race's completion, but preferably the same day. Results must include at minimum each finisher's place, full name, gender and finishing time provided in overall place by sex and by award categories (age groups, etc...).

Categories:

Required: At minimum awards must be provided for at least three deep for overall male, overall female and for both male and female age groups in the following 10-year age group must be provided and included within results: 19 & Under, 20-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70 & Over. Additional age groups may be added at the races discretion. Recommended: It is highly recommended that races use 5-year age groups as follows (Required for Circuit Races): 14 & Under, 15-19, 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, 40-44, 45-49, 50-54, 55-59, 60-64, 65-69, 70-74, 75-79, 80-84 and 85 & Over. Additional age groups may be added at the races discretion.

Place Determination:

Required: The overall winner (for each sex) must be determined by actual order of finish/gun-time. At the races discretion all other placing's may be determined by either actual order of finish / gun-time or by chip-time. The method in use must be announced prior to the start and in pre-event online information.

Ceremony:

Required: An awards ceremony with amplified sound capabilities must be held for overall awards. All other awards may be distributed either through ceremony or by on-site pick-up at the discretion of the race. If awards are not able to be provided on-site in a timely manner due to results issues, the race must offer to mail awards to recipients at no cost to the participants.

Toilet Requirements

Quantity:

Required: An appropriate number of toilets must be provided within close proximity of the start line with at least one toilet available per 50 runners registered. When counted toilets are located within gender restricted restrooms, these toilets may only be counted as 0.75 each towards the required total. Any on-course toilets, and those not within close proximity to the start / finish may NOT be included in minimums. When the finish line or post-race area is not within close proximity of start line toilets, additional toilets must be available within close proximity of the finish line in a minimum amount equal to half the required minimums for the start line area. All events must abide by ADA requirements, including insuring that at least 5% of toilets are ADA accessible.

On-Course:

Recommended: It is recommended that toilets be available at each Aid Station for races 10K and longer at a ratio of at least 1 per 1,000 runners.

Medical Guidelines

Support:

Required: The event must provide a minimum of two certified and insured medical personnel (may NOT include any race participants) that are present at the race site at least 60 minutes prior to the start time and remain until either 30 minutes after the course close or 15 minutes after the last finisher. These persons may be volunteers. Medical personnel must have on-site access to basic first aid supplies. Mass participation races and those 10 miles and longer should expect a greater probability of medical issues on course. Recommended: Races are highly encouraged to have an on-site AED unit and a person assigned to that unit that is certified for its use. Placement of additional medical personnel at each aid station and as on-course bicycle medics is recommended.

Ambulance:

Required: The race must notify local EMS of the event, its start time, its end time, route and how to quickly access the event in case of emergency. Recommended: It is recommended that a dedicated ALS ambulance/s be contracted for the event to be located and on-call at the start / finish lines. Ideal ambulance support is to have an ambulance present at the start, at each aid station and at the finish line anytime participants are present or passing at those areas during the race. When dedicated ambulance services are contracted the ambulance staff may count towards minimum medical staff requirements.

Emergency Action Plan Guidelines

Staffing:

Required: The race must meet all security requirements required by local municipalities and venue owner / operators to insure the safety of the participants, spectators and community.

Communication:

Required: Races must have a communication system (example: two-way radios or cell phones and phone contact lists) in place for all event staff and volunteers with instruction provided for what to do in case of a medical emergency. When volunteers are working in groups at the same location of the race it is appropriate for only the group leader to be on the contact list.

Emergency Action Plan:

Required: An Emergency Action Plan should be devised that includes at minimum plans for hazardous weather conditions. Races may not begin if lightning has been present within six miles of any part of the race site or course within 30 minutes or it is highly probable that lightning will strike within this range during the course of the event. Recommended: An complete emergency action plan is recommended that includes an event communication plan, key contact list, who key decision makers are, where and how key decision makers will meet in case of emergency, a media communication plan, a medical emergency plan, conditions and procedures for delay and cancellation (including inclement weather), evacuation plan, participant SAG plan for those who are not able to complete the race, and missing persons plan (lost children, etc...).

Event Alert System:

Recommended: Use of the nationally standardized Event Alert System (EAS) is recommended, but not required. When in use EAS colored flags or signs should be located at the start, at each

aid station and at the finish area. When in use the EAS level must be announced and explained at the start and any possibility for a change to another EAS level should be announced as well. Learn more about EAS with an internet search of "RRCA Event Alert System".

Other Guidelines

Gear Check:

Required: Free gear check is required for all events located within the City of Chicago. Free gear check is required at all events where reasonable parking accommodation is not available for all participants within 0.5 miles of the start/finish, or where it is reasonable to expect many participants will use public transportation or may bike to the event. When providing gear check the race must provide the service beginning at least 60 minutes prior to the start and until at least 30 minutes after the course close or 15 minutes after the last finisher. This area must be secure and supervised at all times, and a method to organize and identifying participant's gear must be in place.

Recommended: It is recommended to provide free gear check as outlined above at all events, regardless of proximity of parking.

Headphones:

Recommended: It is recommended that races prohibit or strongly recommended not participating with headphones or personal speakers.