

FACTS

Shared Use Agreements

Sharing School Recreational Facilities with the Community

OVERVIEW

The U.S. is in the grips of a full-blown obesity epidemic. Currently, 35% of adults are obese.¹ If current trends continue, over 50% of the population will be obese by 2030.² In light of these dire statistics, it is critical to find ways to increase physical activity opportunities in the places where people live, work, learn, and play: making the healthy choice the easy choice. However, over 50% of U.S. adults and 65% of adolescents do not currently get the recommended amount of physical activity each day.³

Providing access to safe, affordable and convenient recreational facilities is a critical strategy for helping people be more active, especially in lower-income communities and communities of color that often lack such facilities.³ Some school districts are maximizing shared use of school facilities to address the educational and health needs of students and the community's need for recreational activity spaces.⁴

SHARED USE AGREEMENTS

School facilities can be an excellent resource for recreation and exercise where there is limited availability.⁵ However, many schools either do not share their recreational facilities or limit the types of shared use and facilities that are available to the public during non-school hours.⁶ Concerns about liability, insurance, safety, cost, staffing and maintenance are commonly cited as reasons for not opening their facilities to the community outside of school hours.^{7,8}

The reality is that if school districts maintain their property, carry insurance, and enter into formal shared use agreements, they can minimize their liability risks.⁷

Change Lab Solutions has created a toolkit that provides model agreements, case studies, funding options, and other information for implementing shared use agreements.⁹ Shared use agreements allow school districts, local governments, and community-based organizations to overcome common district concerns and share costs and responsibilities of opening school property to the public after school hours.^{8,9}



THE HEALTH BENEFITS

In order for adults and children to get the exercise they need to be healthy, they need places to be active. Research has shown that lower-income people who have parks or recreational facilities nearby exercise 38% more than those who do not have easy access.¹⁰ Additionally, people living in close proximities to parks and other recreational facilities have significantly lower BMIs.¹¹

SOME SUCCESS STORIES

Schools can create access by opening existing facilities during non-school hours, integrating the opportunity for community use when planning new construction projects, or building collaborative relationships and entering into reciprocal agreements with local governments or community organizations.^{5,12}

- The San Francisco Unified School District and the City and County of San Francisco have an agreement that allows the city to unlock the outdoor playground areas for open, unsupervised use during non-school hours. The city assumes the liability and responsibility for injury, vandalism and/or littering during these recreation times.¹³
- A program in the Boyle Heights and Pico-Union neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Calif., called Joint Use Generating Activity and Recreation (JUGAR), brought together community stakeholders and public agencies to increase access to public space for physical activity. Effective engagement of school administrators and community partners ensured that

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all stakeholders understood the needs of the community and the terms of the agreement, which led to JUGAR's success.¹⁴

- A school district in New Orleans allowed for supervised use of its recreational facilities outside of school hours, which led to children being 84% more likely to be active outdoors. It also led to children spending less time watching television and playing video games.⁴
- A Seattle school district have partnered with the city's parks and recreation department on a five joint use agreement.¹⁵ The agreement mandates that all public facilities should be available for utilization by all residents to their fullest extent.¹⁵ The school district and the city are equally responsible for maintaining the facilities to ensure maximum usage and public safety.¹⁵
- In recent years, the Arizona legislature has classified school grounds as public parks outside of class hours.¹⁶ This includes charter schools and liability protection for the use of indoor facilities.¹⁶

Funding for shared use projects or agreements may come from a variety of sources including developer impact fees, 21st Century Community Learning Center grants, special bond funds, local general obligation bonds, shared use partner funds, private foundation grants, business sponsorships, and utilization fees.

THE ASSOCIATION ADVOCATES

- Modifying existing resources and toolkits to apply more generally to states across the country and disseminate these resources to communities to educate and inform about the importance of developing and maintaining shared use agreements through existing state and federal funding programs or information dissemination.
- Integrating shared use agreements into the existing federal and state programs, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund.
- Incorporating shared use agreements into statewide recreation plans (SCORPs).
- Having state and federal governments require communities applying for public funding or grants to implement shared use agreements.
- Passing state legislation that encourages, supports, or authorizes school districts to enter into agreements supporting shared use of facilities and

protects schools from liability when they enter these agreements with third parties.

- Integrating shared use agreements into school construction projects and encourage districts to reconsider traditional school architecture to make facilities more inviting to the community. Since the voter population with school-aged children is often declining in many areas of the country, it may be easier to garner support for school construction projects if the new facilities are shared with the community.

¹ Mozaffarian, D., et al. Heart disease and stroke statistics-2015 update: a report from the American Heart Association. *Circulation*. 2015. 131(4): e29-e322.

² Finkelstein EA, et al. Obesity and severe obesity forecasts through 2030. *Am J Prev Med*. 2012;42:563-570.

³ Powell LM, et al. Availability of physical activity-related facilities and neighborhood demographic and socioeconomic characteristics: a national study. 2006. *Am J Public Health*; 96: 1676-1680.

⁴ Farley, et al. Safe Place Spaces to Promote Physical Activity in Inner-City Children: Results from a Pilot Study of an Environmental Intervention, 2007. *97 Am. J. Pub. Health* 1625-31.

⁵ Spengler JO, et al. Schools as a community resource for physical activity: legal considerations for decision makers. 2006. *Am J Health Promot.*; 21: 390-396.

⁶ Evenson KR, et al. National study of changes in prevalence and community access to school physical activity facilities: The School Health Policies and Programs Study. 2010. *J Phys Act Health*; 7: S20-S30.

⁷ Baker T, et al. Liability risks for after-hours use of school property to reduce obesity: A 50-state survey. 2010. *J School Health*; 80(10): 508-513.

⁸ Spengler JO, et al. Liability Concerns and Shared Use of School Recreational Facilities in Underserved Communities. 2011. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. 41(4): p. 415-420.

⁹ Change Lab Solutions. Opening school grounds to the community after hours: A toolkit for increasing physical activity through joint use agreements. 2010. Available at: [http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/CA_Joint_Use_Toolkit_FINAL_\(CLS_20120530\)_2010_01_28.pdf](http://changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/CA_Joint_Use_Toolkit_FINAL_(CLS_20120530)_2010_01_28.pdf). Accessed on May 18, 2015.

¹⁰ Cohen DA, et al. Contribution of public parks to physical activity. 2007. *American Journal of Public Health*; 97:509-514.

¹¹ Rundle, A., et al. Associations between body mass index and park proximity, size, cleanliness, and recreational facilities. 2013. *Health Promotion*; 27(4): 262-269.

¹² Lafleur M, et al. Increasing Physical Activity in Under-Resourced Communities Through School-Based, Joint-Use Agreements, Los Angeles County, 2010-2012. *Prev Chronic Dis* 2013;10:120270.

¹³ Center for Cities and Schools. Joint Use School Partnerships in California: Strategies to Enhance Schools and Communities. 2010. Available at: http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/CC&S_PHLIP_2008_joint_use_with_appendices.pdf. Accessed on May 15, 2015.

¹⁴ Center for Cities and Schools. Joint Use School Partnerships in California: Strategies to Enhance Schools and Communities. 2010. Available at: http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/CC&S_PHLIP_2008_joint_use_with_appendices.pdf. Accessed on May 15, 2015.

¹⁵ Seattle School District #1 and Seattle Parks and Recreation. An Agreement for the Joint Use of Facilities Between the Seattle School District #1 and Seattle Parks and Recreation. 2010. Available at: <http://www.seattle.gov/parks/publications/policy/jua.pdf>. Accessed on May 18, 2015.

¹⁶ <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/51leg/2r/bills/sb1336s.htm>