

# **Physical Activity for Youth Policy Initiative**

*Presented by the*



*on behalf of the Physical Activity for Youth Steering Committee.*

## COMMUNITY PROGRAMS: ACCESS & OUTREACH

### **RATIONALE:**

Community-based youth sport and physically active recreation programs provide children and youth with significant amounts of moderate to vigorous physical activity during after-school, weekend, and summer periods. However, barriers such as lack of transportation and cost prevent many children from participating in these programs. Guaranteeing that every child has access to existing community-based physical activity programs during after-school, weekend, and summer periods will insure that all children can enjoyably engage in regular physical activity.

### **RECOMMENDED POLICY OPTIONS:**

1. Require that federal and state programs targeted to underserved populations and communities incorporate physical activity.
2. Require that summer programs provide daily opportunities for physical activity.
3. Support access to community based programs by offering transportation options.

### **POLICIES IN ACTION:**

The following examples provide some examples of how the above policy initiatives regarding community-based programs have worked in action:

#### **Community Development Block Grants**

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awards grants to entitlement communities (must be low-income) in urban areas to carry out various development activities including public recreation activities. Each community that receives CDBG funding must develop a Consolidated Plan and an annual action plan; they are then allocated funds based on a formula. Funds are also available for non-entitlement zones through funding to states. For example:

##### *City of Los Angeles Summer Sports Academy*

The City of LA included recreation in their initial proposal for CDBG funding (1996); targeting 99 recreation centers. The total budget for CDBG recreation programs is \$2.7 million. LA Parks and Recreation designed a range of programs to meet the varied interests of youth in different communities. The Summer Sports Academy is a program in which each week (for eight weeks) urban youth are bused to open-space locations and receive top-rate instruction in baseball, soccer, and softball. Mini-Academies are traveling clinics that offer youth opportunities to gain skills in tennis, boxing, and fine arts in their own communities.

#### **Collaboration: “Movin’ Van”**

In Graham, North Carolina, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, the Graham Parks and Recreation Department, and Be Active North Carolina have partnered to provide

opportunities for physical activity to underserved children and adolescents. The “Movin’ Van” program targets overweight children ages 9 through 13 who live in Graham public housing. Physical activity specialists travel in a van to bring active recreation, such as equipment for sports and games, to two low-income neighborhoods three times a week during after school hours or in the morning (during the summer). Two private companies, Polar Electro and Healthfirst, USA, donated equipment that will be used to gather project health data.

### **Funds to Participate**

Alabama House Bill 266 appropriates funds by providing funding for participation in a local YMCA swimming program, allowing indigent children to participate in community programs.

### **Free Transportation to Physical Activity Opportunities**

The city of Santa Barbara, CA provides free public transportation to individuals visiting city pools.

### **Hearts N’ Parks:**

Hearts N’ Parks is a national, community-based program supported by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI) of the National Institutes of Health and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The program aims to reduce the growing trend of obesity and the risk of coronary heart disease in the U.S. by encouraging all ages to aim for a healthy weight, follow a heart-healthy eating plan, and engage in regular physical activity. The program is being implemented in fifty magnet cities around the country. For example:

#### *Kansas City, Missouri*

The Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department launched their Hearts ‘N Parks initiative in June with the help of their Mayor, city officials, state Department of Health, and a few hundred kids in summer camp programs. The event was co-sponsored by the local Fox-4 TV station and a popular radio station and featured fun activities for the kids. The Hearts N’ Parks program and news related to the obesity epidemic continue to receive great exposure through regularly aired public service announcements.

### **Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program**

The U.S. Department of the Interior provides federal matching assistance to cities and urban counties to rehabilitate existing recreation facilities through the Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Program.

#### *Wayne County, MI:*

The primary recreation center for the city of Highland Park, the Ernest F. Ford Recreation Center serves all age groups. Their UPARR project will result in installation of a new roof, shower facilities, and glass throughout. This project will bring much needed recreation to one of the states poorest cities with wide spread drug use, and a high unemployment rate.