



On a community scale, it is a low-cost, high-impact way for local elected officials and community leaders to invest in a healthier population.

Professionally led physical activity in communities

OUR POSITION

Because empirical evidence strongly suggests that professionally led physical activity leads to sustainable behavioral change,⁽³⁾ ACE seeks public policies that enable and incentivize the use of accessible public spaces in our nation's cities and towns for physical activity programming facilitated by highly qualified health and fitness professionals.

DISCUSSION

It is the belief of many leading experts that physical activity that is structured, facilitated by well-qualified professionals, and when possible, conducted in a group setting leads to sustainable behavioral change.⁽⁷⁾ Professionally led physical activity can meet a variety of community needs: supervising free play for children for safety and security; instruction in basic physical tools for life such as strength, endurance, flexibility, balance and agility; and coaching for competition. Utilizing open spaces for professionally led physical activity, particularly in group settings, strengthens community bonds and establishes social connections through which an ongoing commitment to more active, healthy lifestyles may be established.^(1, 2, 4, 5) On a community scale, it is a low-cost, high-impact way for local elected officials and community leaders to invest in a healthier population.⁽⁶⁾

Despite an increased interest in and awareness of professionally facilitated group physical activity in the parks and other green spaces of our nation's neighborhoods, few municipal governments have systems in place to sanction such activity. Even fewer promote and encourage the use of local public spaces for professionally facilitated programs that encourage community members to become more physically active.⁽⁶⁾

PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

ACE urges government officials to advance public policies that open parks and other publicly owned spaces to professionally led physical activity and promote engagement in such programs. Specifically, ACE calls for policies that:

- + Establish clear permitting processes and fair, appropriate fee structures for professionally led physical activity in public spaces.
- + Not merely allow but recognize and promote professionally led physical activity in public spaces, encouraging or providing incentives for community members to participate.
- + Establish high standards for credentials, qualifications and insurance for health and fitness professionals eligible to lead physical activity in public spaces.
- + Put in place a code of conduct for physical activity leaders and participants for managing public resources and interacting with other users.

RESEARCH

1. Foster, C., Cavill, N., Crombie, H., & Naidoo, B. The Effectiveness of Public Health Interventions for Increasing Physical Activity Among Adults: A Review of Reviews. Evidence briefing, 2nd edition. London: Health Development Agency. 2005. Retrieved from: www.hda.nhs.uk/evidence
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Vital Signs: Walking Among Adults-United States, 2005 and 2010. 7 Aug 2012. Retrieved from: www.cdc.gov
3. McClaran, Steven R. The Effectiveness of Personal Training on Changing Attitudes Towards Physical Activity. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*. 2003; 2, 10-14.
4. Cohen, Deborah A.; McKenzie, Thomas L.; Sehgal, Amber; Williamson, Stephanie; Golinelli, Daniela; Lurie, Nicole. (2007). Contribution of Public Parks to Physical Activity. *American Journal of Public Health*. 2007; 97 (3): 509-514.
5. Gladwell, Valerie F.; Brown, Daniel K.; Wood, Carly; Sandercock, Gavin R.; Barton, Jo L. The Great Outdoors: How a Green Exercise Environment Can Benefit All. *Extreme Physiology & Medicine*. 2013; 2:3.
6. Kahn, E.B.; Ramsey, L.T.; Brownson, R.; Heath, G.W.; Howze, E.H.; Powell, K.E.; Stone, E.J.; Rajab, M.W.; Corso, P.; Task Force on Community Preventive Services. The Effectiveness of Interventions to Increase Physical Activity. *American Journal of Prevention Medicine*. 2002; 22(4 Suppl):73-107.
7. Spengler, John O.; Frost, Natasha R.; Bryant, Katherine A. (2014). Integrating Research, Legal Technical Assistance, and Advocacy to Inform Shared Use Legislation in Mississippi. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2014; 28(3 suppl): 100-103.
8. Maddock, Jay E. Academic-Practice Partnerships for Active living: The Healthy Hawaii Initiative. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 2014; 28(3 suppl): 112-113.