

Recommendations for Expanding Physical Activity Opportunities Outside the Classroom

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Introduction

Quality physical activity program can improve the health of children and help motivate them to make healthy decisions throughout life. The way physical activity programs are delivered, however, can vary greatly which affects their impact. Structured physical activity can take place through school-sponsored activities or private programs outside the school day. These programs include but are not limited to: After School Care, Intramurals, and specialty clubs. It is essential that children in Texas are presented with quality programming in any and all extra-curricular environment.

Recommended Physical Activity Time For Youth

To underscore the importance of physical activity in the lives of children, it is imperative to incorporate national standards and recommendations and provide the opportunity for quality physical activity outside of the school day for Texas children.

In 2018, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans. The guide states the importance of providing young people opportunities and encouragement to participate in physical activities that are appropriate for their age, that are enjoyable, and that offer variety. Children and adolescents ages 6 through 17 years should do 60 minutes (1 hour) or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily.

Additionally, the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) recommends children (ages 5-12) should accumulate at least 60 minutes and up to several hours, of age-appropriate physical activity on all, or most days of the week. This daily accumulation should include moderate and vigorous physical activity with the majority of the time being spent in activity that is intermittent in nature. Clinical guidelines, such as those from the American Cancer Society and National Institutes of Health recommend 30-60 minutes per day. In addition, the revised National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) for the United States was launched in 2016. The NPAP includes recommendations across 8 societal sectors, all aimed at increasing physical

activity. The plan for Education includes a comprehensive set of policies, programs, and initiatives based on the following overarching strategies:

- Strategy 1 – States and school districts should adopt policies that support implementation of the Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program model.
- Strategy 2 – Schools should provide high-quality physical education programs.
- Strategy 3 – Providers of afterschool, holiday, and vacation programs for children and youth should adopt policies and practices that ensure that participants are appropriately physically active.
- Strategy 4 – States should adopt standards for childcare and early childhood education programs to ensure that children ages zero to five years are appropriately physically active.
- Strategy 5 – Colleges and universities should provide students and employees with opportunities and incentives to adopt and maintain physically active lifestyles
- Strategy 6 – Educational institutions should provide pre-service professional training and in-service professional development programs that prepare educators to deliver effective physical activity programs for students of all types
- Strategy 7 – Professional and scientific organizations should develop and advocate for policies that promote physical activity among all students.

A policy statement titled “[Active Healthy Living: Prevention of Childhood Obesity through Increased Physical Activity,](#)” was outlined by the American Academy of Pediatrics recommending ways that pediatric health care providers and public health officials can encourage, monitor, and advocate for increased physical activity for children and youth. Physicians are encouraged to take an active role in advocating for policy changes at the community, state, and national levels that support:

- Healthy nutrition;
- Reducing sedentary time; and
- Increasing physical activity levels while providing education and health supervision about regular physical activity and reduced sedentary time to families in their practice.

An additional program called [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program: A Guide for Schools \(CSPAP\)](#) was developed by both the Centers

for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Society of Health and Physical Educators (SHAPE) to assist schools and school districts in the development of comprehensive Out of School Time (OST) programs. The guide can also be utilized by School Health Advisory Councils (SHACs) or by any group implementing and evaluating physical activity programs before, during and after school.

There are many different OST programs available on school grounds, including childcare, youth development, and special interest activities like robotics clubs, arts programs, or sports clubs. Different organizations can run these programs, including schools and school districts, local chapters of national organizations (e.g., Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCAs), universities, community organizations, and parent volunteers. Some programs run until evening (e.g., 3 p.m. – 6 p.m.) and other programs operate using less time.

OST programs also vary in their staffing and leadership, available resources (e.g., equipment, funding, space, and professional development offerings), purpose, and contact hours with children. These factors influence the kinds of physical activity and nutrition policies a program can implement.

Recommendations For Providing Quality Physical Activity Outside The School Day

Schools play a critical role in developing and promoting lifelong health behaviors. In order to meet the diverse needs of students and accommodate an ever-increasing demand for academic rigor, schools must also be allowed some flexibility in delivering health messages and in providing for a child's daily need for physical activity. Therefore, when physical activity is being offered in a variety of ways, quality indicators are essential. Many of the guidelines provided in the sections above, although focused on physical education, should also be expectations of programs being offered to meet the physical activity needs of students. A concerted effort should be made to integrate these concepts and practices into after-school, school-sponsored and off-campus physical activity-based programs.

- Provide qualified/trained staff;
- Address the safety needs, both physically and emotionally, of each student by following appropriate practice guidelines produced by SHAPE.
- Provide opportunity for all students to participate and engage in activity.

- Provide opportunities to experience a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional sports and activities early on.
- Develop knowledge and positive attitudes toward physical activity.
- Provide a portion of each student's recommended weekly amount of physical activity.
- Emphasize health concepts by addressing components of the TEKS.
- Engage parents and guardians.
- Evaluate the success of the program by assessing participants' physical, attitudinal and behavioral health changes.

Texas Requirements

- The Texas Education Code (TEC) [§28.004\(c\)\(5\)](#) states that the local school health advisory council's duties include recommending, if feasible, joint use agreements or strategies for collaboration between the school district and community organizations or agencies. The TEC [§28.004\(n\)](#) states that any joint use agreement that a school district and community organization or agency enter into based on a recommendation of the local school health advisory council must address liability for the school district and community organization or agency in the agreement.
- The TEC [§28.004\(l-1\)](#) state that the local SHAC shall establish a physical activity and fitness planning subcommittee to consider issues relating to student physical activity and fitness and make policy recommendations to increase physical activity and improve fitness among students. Subsection (m)(4) states that the local school health advisory council shall submit to the board of trustees, at least annually, a written report that includes any recommendations made by the physical activity and fitness planning subcommittee.

Nutrition as an Important Part of After School Programming

After-school or out-of-school programs often serve snacks to student participants. Good nutrition should be integrated as a part of this programming to support the development of good health behaviors among youth. In addition, after-school programs should provide sound nutrition education to students including portion control and other types of nutrition guidelines related to foods and beverages, vending machines and competitive food sales. Nutrition guidelines, provided by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), can be found on the [Square Meals](#) website.

After-school snack programs are eligible for snack reimbursement by TDA by following established guidelines.

References

- 1) [American Academy of Pediatrics](#). (2006). Active healthy living: prevention of childhood obesity through increased physical activity. *Pediatrics*, 117(5)
- 2) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program](#)
- 3) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – [Youth Physical Activity Guidelines](#)
- 4) [National Physical Activity Plan of the United States \(May 2010\)](#)
- 5) [Society of Health and Physical Educators](#)
- 6) Texas Department of Agriculture – [Square Meals](#)

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