

# IMPROVING COMMUNITY ACCESS TO SCHOOL FACILITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

## What is Joint Use?

Joint use is when a school district shares indoor and/or outdoor school space with the community before, during or after the school day for physical activity programs such as soccer leagues or dance classes. Some schools may keep their gates unlocked so people can use the school grounds, including playgrounds and fields, outside of school hours.

## Why is Joint Use Important?

- ❖ In many communities, schools provide the only safe place for physical activity. School gates are often closed outside of school hours.
- ❖ Access to no-cost or low-cost places for physical activity is important to prevent obesity.
- ❖ Students who are physically active are more likely to do better in school than their inactive peers.

## What Are Some Barriers to Joint Use?

- ❖ Costs of operations and maintenance
- ❖ Liability if someone is hurt on school property
- ❖ Security on school property
- ❖ Vandalism to school property

## What is the Ideal?

- ❖ Families have access to safe, local places to be active and use schools for recreation.
- ❖ School district and city/county agencies agree that schools are a resource for the whole community.
- ❖ School districts enter into joint use agreements with non-profits or government agencies, to outline how maintenance, operations, and liability will be addressed.

## What Can Parents Do?

- ❖ Find out if families in your community need safe places to play and be active and if they would use the school grounds if they were open.
- ❖ Speak to parents, teachers and school staff about the importance of physical activity for children and their families.
- ❖ Speak to your school principal or school district wellness committee to find out why your neighborhood school is not open.
- ❖ Share successes from other communities that have school grounds open outside of school hours on how they addressed concerns about maintenance, liability and operations costs and were able to keep their school grounds open. See [www.jointuse.org](http://www.jointuse.org) for success stories.
- ❖ Find out if the district is working with other agencies such as city/county government or nonprofit organizations and see if there is a relationship to build on.



## Additional Resources

### *California Project LEAN*

For information on joint use and state and local efforts visit [www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org](http://www.CaliforniaProjectLEAN.org)

### *JointUse.org*

For information on joint use, success stories and efforts around California visit [www.jointuse.org](http://www.jointuse.org)

### *Opening School Grounds to the Community After Hours: A Toolkit for Increasing Physical Activity Through Joint Use Agreements*

For a toolkit, developed by Public Health Law and Policy, visit [www.phlpnet.org](http://www.phlpnet.org)



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