



On a community scale, structured physical activity is a low-cost, high-impact way for municipal and community leaders to invest in getting more people moving and creating healthier communities.

IN COMMUNITY: Structured Physical Activity

OUR POSITION

ACE seeks public policies that enable and incentivize the use of accessible public spaces in our nation's cities, towns and counties for safe, structured physical activity programming facilitated by appropriately qualified individuals.

CALL TO ACTION

ACE urges government officials to advance public policies that open parks and other publicly owned/managed spaces to structured physical activity experiences facilitated by appropriately qualified individuals, and promote engagement in such programs. Specifically, ACE calls for policies that:

- + Establish clear permitting processes and fair, appropriate fee structures for physical activity in public spaces led by appropriately qualified individuals.
- + Build systems that allow and encourage collaborative community partnerships for affordable structured physical activity programs on public lands, particularly in areas of need.
- + Retrofit or establish built environments that make regular physical activity accessible, safe and desirable across the population, regardless of demographic.
- + Establish high standards for credentials and qualifications for well-qualified exercise professionals seeking to lead physical activity programs in public spaces as a commercial endeavor.
- + Establish policies for organizations and appropriately qualified community leaders seeking to lead no-cost, structured physical activity in public spaces.
- + Put in place a code of conduct for physical activity leaders and participants for managing public resources, protecting against overuse and interacting with other users.

WHY

Empirical evidence strongly suggests that structured physical activity that is facilitated by well-qualified professionals, and when possible, conducted in a group setting leads to sustainable behavioral change.¹ Professionally led physical activity can provide instruction in basic physical tools for life, such as strength, endurance, flexibility, balance and agility. 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.² On a community scale, it is a low-cost, high-impact way for municipal and community leaders to invest in getting more people moving and creating healthier communities.

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, local governments often lack systems to sanction such activity.³ ACE supports public policies that enable and incentivize the use of public spaces to facilitate the physical activity programming that is needed to achieve behavior changes associated with a healthy lifestyle.

RESEARCH

1. Burke, Shauna M and Carron, Albert V and Eys, Mark A and Ntoumanis, Nikos and Estabrooks, Paul A. 2006. Group versus individual approach? A meta-analysis of the effectiveness of interventions to promote physical activity. *Sport and Exercise Psychology Review*, 2 (1). pp. 19-35.
2. Bedimo-Rung, Ariane L. et al. 2005. The significance of parks to physical activity and public health. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, Volume 28, Issue 2, 159 – 168.
3. Henderson, A., Fry, C. 2011. Better Parks Through Law and Policy: A Legal Analysis of Authorities Governing Public Parks and Open Spaces. *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, Volume 8, Issue s1, S109-S115.