

# Joint and Shared Use: Getting Started at Your School

In neighborhoods across the country, schools play a central role in providing opportunities for students and their families to be active and healthy through community partnerships. Working with public agencies, community organizations, and residents, schools can expand community access to recreational facilities – including gyms, playgrounds, and tracks – during non-school hours through use of joint/shared use agreements.

## WHAT IS JOINT/SHARED USE?

- **Joint/shared use happens when two or more private or public entities agree to expand access to an indoor or outdoor space for community use**, often for physical activity. *For example, a school can open up their gym to a youth organization to provide a home for an evening basketball league.*
- Joint/shared use offers communities with limited access to parks, open space and indoor recreation facilities an easy way to expand access to physical – by using existing community facilities.
  - Studies show that joint/shared use successfully attracts residents to facilities for physical activity outside of normal business hours.

## WHY IS JOINT/SHARED USE GOOD FOR MY SCHOOL?

- **Improves student academic performance.** *Healthier students are better learners.* Students who are more active during and outside of school are more likely to stay in school and succeed academically.
- **Supports greater alignment and integration between education and health to advance a holistic, whole child approach.** Joint/shared use is a perfect example of how schools can make positive impacts on students' cognitive, physical, social, and emotional health using a comprehensive, collaborative approach, also known as the coordinated school health model. This approach, which builds upon the idea that students thrive in healthy school environments that are supported by the whole community, fosters healthier students and improved learning.
- **Increases parent and community engagement.** Joint/shared use provides schools the opportunity to engage parents and community residents, both during the planning process and through activities and programming offered outside school hours.
- **Fosters collaboration and cost-sharing.** Joint/shared use allows partners to maximize existing community resources and resources, while keeping program costs manageable.
- **Establishes protections** for both the school and the community using school facilities. Agreements help spell out roles, expectations, operating school facilities in a safe manner, and liability.
- **Increases access to safe places to be active.** Joint/shared use agreements provide students and adults with safe and accessible recreational spaces and programming right in their own neighborhoods. Schools are critical resources that, through partnerships, can serve as hubs of physical activity and community life and well-being.

### ADDITIONAL TERMS

**Shared Use:** Refers broadly to any agreement that offers a way for schools or districts to open their facilities for community use.

**Open Use:** Allows community residents to use public space, such as a school, without a formal agreement. For example, a school track can remain unlocked during non-school hours for public use.

**Community Use Agreement:** Allows community groups to use school facilities for youth activities or one-time events, often with a form or permit. *For example, a local health clinic could host a health fair at a school cafeteria.*

## WHAT IS A JOINT/SHARED USE AGREEMENT?

- A **Joint/Shared Use Agreement (JUA)** is a formal agreement between two or more partners that outlines the terms and conditions for shared use of an indoor or outdoor facility.
- There is no one model for joint/shared use agreements, but they generally include roles and responsibilities of all parties involved, and site-level details about implementation, maintenance, operations, and liability.
- *For more information about different types of agreements, such as shared, open, or community use, see Safe Routes to School's "Shared Use Spectrum" resource.*