

Community Recreation, Fitness, and Parks

West Virginia is home to beautiful state parks and natural resources, providing an ideal setting/environment for enjoyable and meaningful leisure-time physical activity. Therefore, community recreation, fitness, and parks professionals play an important role in designing and delivering opportunities for citizens to incorporate physical activity into their daily lives. This can be accomplished through strategies to provide better access to, and education about, existing resources, natural environments, and facilities. Further capacity building by embracing best practices in developing and implementing programs can serve to provide increased opportunities for physical activity for individuals of all ages. Community recreation, fitness, and parks professionals have a responsibility to network and advocate for multi-sector collaborations, policy change, fiscal support and resources for parks, facilities, and programs to positively impact physical activity levels in West Virginia.

Strategies and Tactics

Priority Area 1: Structural Capacity

Priority Area 1 Strategy

Increase the capacity of community recreation, parks, and fitness professionals to incorporate evidence-based physical activity opportunities within community recreation, parks, and fitness areas.

Priority Area 1 Tactics

1

Provide evidence-based physical activity programs for adult populations that will improve function, mood, and quality of life for those with chronic diseases (i.e., arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis).

2

Facilitate the adoption of physical activity programs that encourage free and organized play in nature for youth populations (e.g., outdoor classrooms).

3

Use evidence-informed resources and practices to educate recreation, fitness, and park leaders and staff to deliver developmentally appropriate, modifiable based on safe and accessible physical activity programming.

4	Seek funding to support retaining a group of leaders, staff, and volunteers within community recreation and park organizations to promote, organize, lead, and advocate for initiatives that encourage physical activity in their communities.
5	Engage grant writers in efforts to gain federal/state funding to improve parks and recreational facilities' physical activity equipment and accessibility to equitably support populations of all ages and abilities.

Priority Area 2: Public Awareness and Social Marketing

<i>Priority Area 2 Strategy</i>	
Use traditional and social media outlets to inform and raise public awareness of physical activity resources, programs, and events offered by parks, recreation, and fitness areas within local communities.	

<i>Priority Area 2 Tactics</i>	
1	Utilize various forms of media to educate and encourage the general public about the benefits of leisure physical activity for all with particular interest in taking advantage of West Virginia's natural resources (i.e., hiking, backpacking, etc.).
2	Execute comprehensive social marketing campaigns to target underserved populations emphasizing inexpensive, family-friendly options at local parks and recreation facilities.
3	Market physical activity opportunities within existing unique local, regional, and statewide parks, trails, and other outdoor recreation areas.
4	Encourage other groups and individuals with their own social media influences to create public service announcements about the advantages of physical activity as well as the local fitness and outdoor adventure resources for their followers (e.g., West Virginia Tourism, school groups, "influencers").
5	Circulate the contributions of recreation, fitness, and park areas and services to increasing physical activity within the communities they serve as well as various stakeholders.
6	Provide up-to-date listings of available physical activity groups and classes within recreation, fitness, and park areas' webpages as well as share online brochures and offer downloadable maps.

Priority Area 3: Community Engagement and Environment

<i>Priority Area 3 Strategy</i>	
Work with community planners and leaders to develop and preserve parks and recreation spaces/facilities that are conducive for leisure physical activity for all.	

Priority Area 3 Tactics

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| 1 | Provide safe and accessible spaces (i.e., well-maintained equipment, proper lighting) within community recreation, parks, and fitness areas for physical activity participation of a variety of users across the lifespan. |
| 2 | Engage the community in lobbying for upgrades to existing parks and recreational areas and develop new physical activity opportunities in areas of high need. |
| 3 | Utilize the communities' input on how to create or improve accessibility to local recreation areas and parks with particular interest in people with disabilities (e.g., mobility device access, vision-impaired aides) and underserved populations. |
| 4 | Contribute to comprehensive city and county planning initiatives to ensure that they incorporate close-to-home opportunities to access parks and recreation spaces/facilities for physical activity. |

Priority Area 4: Policy

Priority Area 4 Strategy

Advocate for use of best practices in physical activity program planning, implementation, management, and evaluation to leverage policy support for additional funding, resources, and facilities.

Priority Area 4 Tactics

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| 1 | Educate and encourage collaboration between key decision makers throughout the state regarding the need for support of physical activity for all citizens utilizing parks and recreation spaces. |
| 2 | Partner with local and state advocacy groups that promote physical activity policies directed at improving holistic health and quality of life. |
| 3 | Promote park programs and policies that make it safe and easy for residents to be physically active, regardless of their age, race, income, or ability. |
| 4 | Advocate for the establishment of a state office for outdoor recreation to develop policies and partnerships between federal, state, and local land management agencies that promote physical activity. |
| 5 | Organize lobbyists at the state level that will serve as proponents of accessible and relevant physical activity policies in recreational parks and spaces. |

Priority Area 5: Multi-Sector Collaboration

Priority Area 5 Strategy

Establish mutually beneficial cross-sector relationships and partnerships with key health and physical activity stakeholders, researchers, and related industry experts.

Priority Area 5 Tactics

1

Foster collaboration with public health and higher education researchers to identify and write grant applications to create new, or enhance existing, physical activity facilities and services.

2

Partner with teachers across schools to offer environmental education programs, active classes in alternative spaces, and physical activity-related field trips for school-aged students to local and state resources, such as parks, golf courses, hiking trails, public swimming pools, and recreational facilities.

3

Become engaged in community planning efforts and advocate for the improvement of infrastructure to support safe active transport (i.e., bike lanes, sidewalks, widened roadways, walkable communities, trail systems) and better connectivity within communities.

4

Work with public health and industry evaluators to develop and utilize methods for monitoring and evaluating the use and programming of facilities and parks that offer physical activity opportunities.

5

Offer incentives (i.e., naming rights, promotional signage) to local businesses that are willing to invest in community recreation and park facilities and spaces.

6

Establish shared-use agreements with faith-based facilities to promote physical activity opportunities for all ages and abilities.

7

Collaborate with aging service providers (e.g., State Units on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging, etc.) to provide physical activity opportunities for older adults that are adaptable for all levels of fitness and ability.