STEP 1

MAKE CANFIT'S SOUL PRINCIPLES THE HEART OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

IN THIS SECTION, YOU WILL:

- Learn about the Soul Principles
- Learn Physical Activity Core Competencies
- Get yourself more active but focus on youth!

APPLY CANFIT'S SOUL PRINCIPLES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

The following Soul Principles are the guiding creed of CANFIT's ACTIVE8:

- Create an environment that fosters participation by all
- Provide a space for youth to lead activities
- Emphasize health at every size
- Respect different cultures within your program

Whether you're advocating for physical activity, designing a program or leading exercises, make the Soul Principles the heart of everything you do. When designing and instructing physical activity, keep every youth in mind.

Remember to start with the Soul when you are implementing a new physical activity program, game, sport, etc.

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT THAT FOSTERS PARTICIPATION BY ALL

- Offer a variety of activities to help youth develop the skills and confidence to participate
- Play games that involve all participants, not just a few
- Do not to use physical activity as punishment or reward, which can cause youth to form negative associations with physical activity and be less inclined to participate
- Be enthusiastic and creative in order to keep youth interested

PROVIDE A SPACE FOR YOUTH TO LEAD ACTIVITIES

- Choose activity and enjoyment over competition
- Youth can learn a great deal from engaging in competition, but be sure to offer a wide range of competitive and non-competitive activities to appeal to a larger audience of youth

EMPHASIZE HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE

- Do not single out individuals
- Promote a positive body image
- Do *not* to use weight, size or BMIas a measure of health

RESPECT DIFFERENT CULTURES WITHIN YOUR PROGRAM

- Keep in mind that individuals may hold different values about exercise and fitness
- Teach the youth in your program to respect all people

WHAT IS HEALTH AT EVERY SIZE?

Health at Every Size (HAES) is an approach to health that focuses on intuitive eating and joyful physical activity rather than dieting and weight loss.

THE TRUTH ABOUT BMI

Body Mass Index, or BMI, is simply a ratio of weight to height and does not indicate a person's fitness, activity level or health status.

BMI is not used as a recommended indicator in ACTIVE8, as it does not align with the principles of Health At Every Size. It is important to stress to youth that size does not indicate health or fitness level and physical activities can be suited for anyone.

For more info to address this issue with youth, check out: **http://www.bodypositive.com, "children and weight" tab**

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DEVELOP STAFF CORE COMPETENCIES

Taking action to increase physical activity and improve the overall health among young people in after school programs requires a tremendous amount of staff buy in. With the constant pressures and demands to meet a student's academic needs, we understand how difficult it can be for staff to continually promote healthy eating and physical activity daily. That's why we have designed this guide to provide after school staff with easy ways to implement physical activity into breaks, while tutoring, and throughout the after school time period.

It is important for your program to create (if you haven't already) a list of staff core competencies or polices relating to physical activity; these could include: 1) leading appropriate physical activity techniques, 2) making physical activity a daily routine, 3) providing a variety of activities to choose from—refer to STEP 4. These core competencies will remind staff of how important it is to keep youth active.

We also recommend that staff attend periodic trainings or workshops on physical activity to enhance their knowledge and involvement with young people. (A listing of physical activity trainings for after school staff is on CANFIT's website on the Publications tab at: **www.canfit.org**.) Some examples include teaching youth providers indoor and outdoor games, incorporating sports into after school programs, creating an activity program and building a community playground.

Below is a sample of staff core competencies that you can develop for your program. Make sure to develop competencies that make sense for your specific program.

STAFF CORE COMPETENCIES (example)

1. I am comfortable leading activities and games.
2. I know a variety of games and can switch easily from one to the next.
3. I am able to manage the youth in my program.
4. I do not use physical activity as punishment or reward.
5. I allow youth some free time as well as having structured play and activities.
6. I know how to start and stop a game effectively.
7. I know how to address issues such as teasing when they arise.
8. I know how to modify activities to suit all skill levels.
9. I know how to address body image and culture when talking to youth.

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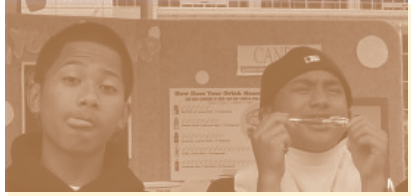

ADVOC8 for Physical Activity

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STEP 2

GET TO KNOW YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENVIRONMENT

IN THIS SECTION, YOU WILL LEARN:

- How to get to know your physical activity environment
- What's in your community that affects physical activity
- Tips to change your physical activity culture

Now that you've become familiar with the Soul Principles, it's time to start thinking about your program. Did you know that research has shown that low-income youth of color face significant barriers to being active, including lack of access to parks, outdoor spaces and fitness facilities; concerns about personal safety and crime in their neighborhood; costs related to membership fees, equipment fees or transportation to and from fitness facilities; and cultural norms related to physical activity?

Think about how some of these barriers may relate to your program and community.

- Is your school site or after school program space conducive to physical activity?
- Is there a grassy area or a safe surface to play?
- Is your community or neighborhood around your program safe and walkable?
- Are there sidewalks, bike paths or pedestrian-friendly areas that support physical activity? These often include parks, trails, fitness centers, schools and streets.

Now let's imagine you have all of these spaces and facilities available in your program. Is that enough to create a high-quality, positive physical activity environment? What if some youth in your program are not into playing sports and get left out when others are more physically skilled? Are there enough physical activity opportunities for girls? Think back to the Soul Principles, such as "Participation by All" and "Choose Activity and Enjoyment over Competition." The conditions or situations may never be perfect, but as a youth leader, it is important to get to know the physical surroundings of your environment and the culture of your environment before engaging in any physical activity instruction.

Getting to know your physical activity environment is an important step to improving the quality of physical activity and advocating for what the youth in your program need and deserve; however, we also know that the task of assessing the current environment may seem overwhelming. The good news is you do not have to do it all on your own. In fact, getting youth involved in learning about their physical activity environment can help them become more invested in your program while developing their leadership skills.

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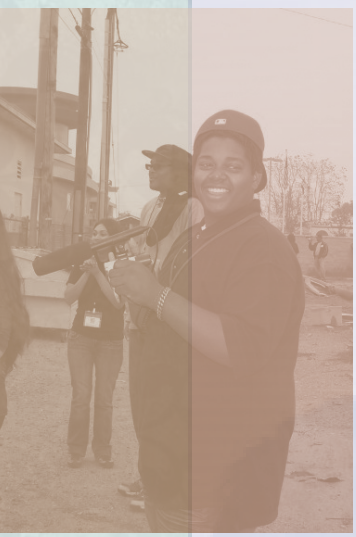
THE FOLLOWING TWO ACTIVITIES CAN HELP YOU AND YOUR YOUTH ASSESS YOUR CURRENT PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENVIRONMENT

ACTIVITY 1: WHAT'S IN MY COMMUNITY?



COMMUNITY MAPPING

Community mapping is a method for collecting information on elements of the physical and social environment to determine what's great and what could be better in ta community. The inventory can include grocery stores, restaurants, health care facilities, places for physical activity, schools, churches, role models, presence of law enforcement, criminal elements, available jobs, types of residences, and billboard advertisements, all of which directly or indirectly impact nutrition and physical activity.

Youth participants can use community mapping to organize their observations of nutrition and physical activity-related places in the areas around their after school program. Information from mapping can help explain how various aspects of the community influence the individual choices that youth make about the foods they eat and the amount of physical activity they take part in. Youth can also develop actions to improve the nutrition and activity environmentof their neighborhood.

OBJECTIVE:

To have youth examine the role that their environment plays in affecting their overall health.
Youth will:

- Participate in a community mapping activity to give them a better idea of how healthy their after school program, community and neighborhood really is.
- Learn about the importance of eating healthy and being active and making your after school program, community and neighborhood healthier places to live.
- Work with their perspective team to take pictures in and around their surrounding area and investigate what is either helping or hurting their ability to eat healthy and be active.

EXAMPLE OF COMMUNITY MAPPING

The youth of one after school program found that their community had only one nearby park, yet it was not a safe place for physical activity, so not many people were using it.

ACTION: The youth organized neighborhood events in the park and made a presentation to the city council about increasing security/ police patrol, better lighting, and repairing sidewalks to make the park a more welcoming place for children and families.

MATERIALS:

- Handouts for exercise
- Paper, pens, markers

AHEAD OF TIME:

Make copies of the Community Mapping sheet

NOTE: *You could also develop your own questions tailored to your youth to assess nutrition and physical activity in their environment. Check out the School Health Index* ***(http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/shi/default.aspx)****, a useful assessment tool for school-based nutrition and physical activity.*

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WHAT TO DO:

1) ASSESS: Have the youth fill out the assessment sheet. (10 minutes)

2) DISCUSS: Gather the youth for an interactive discussion about the assessment (15 minutes).

Use the assessment sheet to facilitate the discussion. Here are some other questions to help guide as well:

- What types of grocery stores, restaurants, and recreational facilities are there?
- Does their school sell unhealthful foods in the vending machines and at lunch?
- Do they have opportunities for physical activity during school hours?
- Does their family regularly participate in physical activity?
- Are fresh fruits or vegetables available for snacking at home?

3) BRAINSTORM: By observing these aspects of their environment, youth can identify the significant nutrition and physical activity-related issues and select an area to change or improve.

From the small group discussions, write down 3 ideas or ways to increase safe physical activity for young people in their school, home or neighborhood. Write these ideas below or somewhere visible for the group to see. (You can also write 3 for the nutrition environment if time allows).

(Physical Activity Examples: Build a skate park for youth. Improve the quality of physical activity during school and/or after school, Increase security at parks.)

1._____

2._____

3._____

4) FOCUS: As a group, choose one topic to focus on. Which option is the most important to you and your group? WHY?

Things to consider when choosing:

- Who is affected by the problem or issue?
- How will the change affect young people in your community?
- How can you recruit your friends and peers to become involved in making changes?

5) PRESENT: Have the youth create a 3 -5 minute presentation in which they advocate for the chosen idea by showing why the issue is important in their school, home or neighborhood. Make a compelling case to get others involved. Your group can create a SKIT, POEM, COMEDY, SPEECH, CAMPAIGN or other format of their own design. The presentation should include all members of your group. Be creative and have fun!

We encourage staff to give youth more time to continue to work on their original and creative presentation and find audiences they can present to (school officials, parents, other youth, etc).

ACTIVITY 2: WHAT ARE WE ABOUT?

OBJECTIVE: To have youth start to think about how they feel about physical activity in your program.

MATERIALS:

- Poster paper
- Markers
- Any other art supplies you choose (paint, magazines for collages, etc.)
- Writing paper
- Pens

WHAT TO DO:

1. Tell youth that you will read three statements, and they will write yes or no on a piece of paper based on whether they agree or disagree with the statement.
2. Tell them they will not need to share their answers with the group. They will turn the papers into staff, but their answers can remain anonymous. (This way you can review the answers later to get an idea about how youth see the culture around physical activity in your program. Feel free to add additional statements based on your program).
3. Read the statements to the students:
   a. I sometimes feel I'm not good enough to participate in active games and exercise routines.
   b. Program staff do not seem to value physical activity and never participate with youth.
   c. I have experienced teasing or have seen someone else get teased based on my/his/her size or athletic ability.
4. Collect the papers, and ask students to think about how this activity made them feel about physical activity in their program.
5. Now ask them to think about what it would be like if everyone in the program could answer "no" to all these statements. What would it be like if all youth felt excited and welcomed to participate in physical activity? If all staff valued being active and participated in activities with students? If no one was teased or bullied about their size or ability?
6. Split the youth into small groups, and distribute the poster paper, markers, and any other art supplies.
7. Ask each small group to work together to create a poster that represents a physical activity environment like the one described above. (Tip: You could distribute the Soul Principles to help with this activity.)
8. Ask youth to present their posters to the rest of the group, and hang the posters around the site to remind youth and staff about the physical activity environment they want to create in their program.

5 TIPS FOR STAFF/ADULTS TO IMPROVE YOUR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE

1. Support the need for safer sidewalks, bike paths, crosswalks, lanes (e.g., night lights, patrols).
2. Keep schools and community centers open in the evenings for physical activities and use joint -use agreements if necessary.
3. Increase time spent on providing quality physical education in your school. Make it a school or district priority!
4. Encourage more indoor physical activity instruction built into the school and after school day (i.e., stretch breaks, activity sessions).
5. Facilitate more discussions about the importance of physical activity (in youth groups, classroom sessions, etc) to create a more positive physical activity culture with youth. (i.e. ask what youth do to stay active, what you do).

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