

Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

PROMOTING PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

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Physical activity, both aerobic and muscle strengthening, provides many health benefits, including lower risk for heart disease, diabetes and cancer. People of all ages and abilities can benefit from being physically active. Adults should get an equivalent of 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week, with two days also having some type of muscle-strengthening activities (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2018).

Increasing equitable access to physical activity through changes to the built environment are among the tenets of policy, system and environmental change (PSE). Various funding streams, such as state and private grants, are available to improve access to physical activity opportunities; however, evidence has indicated that physical changes to the built environment are not effective unless programming is also provided (The Community Guide, 2021), but there is strong evidence from the same research that community-wide campaigns are effective.



The amount of time Extension personnel have available to build support for promoting physical activity in the community among partners is often a limiting factor. This factsheet provides suggestions for optimizing time to promote and conduct effective physical activity campaigns at the local level.

1. **Include planning time when creating an Extension Individual Action Agenda.** Planning time for more effective physical activity promotional campaigns is likely to extend throughout the year even if the hours are small in some quarters or months. Ample time to identify and recruit new individuals or partners that can help promote physical activity should be included.
2. **Connect with local individuals who have improved their health through physical activity before considering a promotional campaign.** Experience of these healthy role models inspires others with news articles and marketing materials. If help is needed in locating role models, ask trusted individuals also working in health promotion or health care to help you find them.
3. **Host opportunities for community members or those who can represent them to**

share their thoughts on the type of physical activity campaign they would be interested in doing. This action can be taken as the Extension professional talks to community members in finding healthy role models and as a first charge to a planning committee.

4. Convene a planning committee as much as 9-12 months ahead of any promotion being considered. This committee could include as many of the following sectors from the start as you can bring to the table: media, government officials, parks and recreation director, faith-based organization or association leaders, school system leadership or at least the Coordinated School Health Coordinator, and other traditional partners.

5. Prepare for the planning meeting with ideas from community members and ready-made program ideas. Examples of ready-made programs include Extension's Walk Across Tennessee or national campaigns like Move Your Way, which has a variety of multimedia and social media tools for presentation and promotion. Another option that allows for more locally developed action is through connection to national health observances promoted by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institutes of Health or the US Department of Health and Human Services provides suggestions for action. These include:

- February — American Heart Month
- May — National Physical Fitness and Sports Month; National Bike Month
- September — National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month
- November — American Diabetes Month

6. Evaluate the process and outcomes of the campaign while interest is still high and memories are intact.

Much is known about how to promote equitable access for physical activity. Guidance can be found in the National Physical Activity Plan from the Physical Activity Alliance, the Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans and the Community Guide findings for physical activity.

References

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