

# Pittsburg PLAYS- Promoting Local Access to Youth Sports Program Proposal

## Program Overview

The Pittsburg PLAYS initiative 2-year pilot is a partnership between Pittsburg (City), East County School Districts (ECSD) collectively including Pittsburg Unified School District (PUSD), Mt. Diablo Unified School District (MDUSD), Antioch Unified School District (AUSD), and East Contra Costa County Children and Youth Sports Programs (Youth Sports).

PLAYS's goal is to increase usage of ECSD sports facilities by non-profit local youth sports groups through a City funding investment towards the cost of using ECSD indoor and outdoor facilities. The County funding program will cover the full cost of ECSD fees associated with the use of ECSD sports facilities by Youth Sports. PLAYS will also fund a Community Coordinator position to administer the PLAYS program and increase usage of ECSD facilities by Youth Sports.

This program will significantly reduce the high rental costs for Youth Sports and make it possible for more East County youth to engage in healthy sports activities.

## Background

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the availability and cost of using indoor and outdoor fields and facilities owned by ECSD. Following the pandemic, the rental costs for these facilities have increased, making it more difficult and expensive for youth sports groups to access them. This has resulted in underutilization of ECSD sports facilities, overcrowding at local parks, and created barriers to entry for these groups.

To address these challenges, Contra Costa County Supervisor John Gioia worked with local youth sports leaders and organizations to develop this program to increase access and reduce costs for the use of WCCUSD sports facilities by West County children and youth. The City of Pittsburg is using this model to create a pilot for these groups in the service area of the Los Medanos Health Advisory Committee.

Green spaces, such as neighborhood public-school fields and facilities, create connections to nature and promote mental, physical, and social developmental benefits among children and youth. Research shows that the benefits associated with providing children and youth accessible greenspace has a direct correlation to positive health outcomes. Greenspaces have also shown significant health benefits for adults, the economy, and the community environment. And yet with all its benefits, children's access to fields and other green spaces is diminishing, limiting potential prospects for optimal physical and emotional health.

According to the Centers for Disease and Prevention (CDC), regular physical activity through sports participation in a neighborhood or community green space can provide both physical and mental health benefits for children and youth. Constructive use of after-school time, with peer interaction and adult supervision, can help mitigate opportunities for youth to be isolated or otherwise engaged in unhealthy behaviors.

Regular sports and physical activity participation can increase self-confidence, thus enabling children and youth to improve their focus, school performance, sleep, and increase energy levels. Youth and children who participate in sports are also less likely to display anxiety disorders, depression, suicidal and violent tendencies, and more likely to report higher levels of happiness and well-being. Youth sports programs also provide added motivation to stay physically fit and ready for competition, which may discourage athletes from sexual activity and encourage the use of birth control to reduce the incidence of teenage pregnancy. Finally, the overall health benefits of sports programming for children and youth is that they can greatly reduce the likelihood of youth being overweight or obese and foster the establishment healthier lifestyle habits at an early age.

Obesity prevalence among children and youth continues to be high in the United States. According to the Centers for Disease Control, nationally, the prevalence of obesity was 19.7% for youth ages 2-19 from 2017 to 2020. The prevalence by age group was 12.7% among 2- to 5-year-olds, 20.7% among 6- to 11-year-olds, and 22.2% among 12- to 19-year-olds.

Unfortunately, neighborhoods with a large proportion of low-income or racial/ethnic minority residents typically experience limited access to quality parks and green space, as well as limited physical activity programming within the spaces. These disparities have only grown since the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the need to ensure that the benefits of parks and green space are accessible to and enjoyed by the community at large.

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted student routines and reduced their daily levels of physical activity within a school environment. Unfortunately, this led to an increase in children and youth obesity rates among many communities. The CDC has indicated that children gained weight at a faster rate during the pandemic (June 2020-November 2020) compared to pre-pandemic, with younger school-aged children (ages 6-11) experiencing a rate of Body Mass Index (BMI) change that was 2.5% higher than before the pandemic.

Strategies for increasing access to green spaces and the ability of children and youth to establish a healthy lifestyle are vital and can be promoted through the expansion of partnerships.

Joint use of existing city and school district facilities is an effective way to increase usage of underutilized facilities, lower usage costs, decrease the need to build expensive new sports facilities, and host programs more cost-effectively in convenient locations, and increase connectivity to local green spaces.

The PLAYS pilot program will be funded through Los Medanos Health Advisory Committee revenue received by Contra Costa Health Services.

**Annual Budget \$250,000**

| <b>Item</b>                                 | <b>Cost per year</b> |
|---|----------------------|
| PLAYS Community Coordinator                 | \$50,000             |
| School District Fees for Facility/Field Use | \$200,000            |

**Expected Beneficiaries**

- East Contra Costa County Children and Youth in Pittsburg, Bay Point and parts of Antioch
- Local non-profit children and youth sports organizations serving residents in the LMHAC service area

**Project Objectives**

- Increase usage of ECSD indoor and outdoor sports facilities
- Increase healthy sports opportunities for East County youth
- Prioritize access to school facilities based on residency of youth organization members
- Decrease the rental costs to organizations serving local youth
- Improve field and facility rental process for ECSD
- Improve the health of local youth through increased sports activity

## Implementation

The County, City and ECSD recommend hiring a part time Community Coordinator to support the implementation and administration of the program. The Community Coordinator will work with ECSD staff and make regular report outs.

The part-time Coordinator's main tasks include, but are not limited to, improving the field and facility rental process, collect data to assist with reporting, assist with billing to Contra Costa County, and assist with communication between sports organizations, ECSD and the County.

## Implementation

- Number of East County Children served
- Number of sports organizations benefiting from the program
- Number of fields and facilities rentals
- Number of hours spent doing physical activity
- Pre and post surveys from sports organizations benefiting from program and the school community