

Salud America!

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Research
Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children



RESEARCH REVIEW
July 2013

Using Shared Use Agreements and Street-Scale Improvements to Support Physical Activity among Latino Youths

Abstract

Latino children in underserved communities often have limited options for physical activity. Several initiatives have sought to promote physical activity by increasing access to public recreational facilities, such as school gymnasiums, athletic fields, and playgrounds. Concerns about liability, staffing, maintenance, and costs often hinder these efforts. Formal contracts for the shared use of facilities, called shared use agreements (SUAs), can overcome some of these challenges. SUAs have been successful in some areas of the country, but understanding the barriers and solutions to creating SUAs is necessary for developing and implementing these agreements on a wider scale.

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Proximity to recreation sites and neighborhood conditions also influence youths' physical activity levels in underserved communities, as children are less likely to use recreation sites that they perceive to be inaccessible or unsafe. For this reason, implementing street-scale improvements, such as repairing sidewalks or installing bike lanes, is another important strategy for promoting physical activity among Latino children because such improvements could help increase accessibility and promote active transport to schools, parks, and other recreation sites.

This comprehensive research review summarizes the current literature on the implementation of SUAs and street-scale improvements to increase physical activity among Latino children in underserved communities in the United States.

Introduction

In the United States, rates of overweight and obesity among Latino children (38%) are higher than those among their White peers (29%).¹ Physical activity is important for good health, physical and cognitive growth and development, and maintaining a healthy weight.² However, Latino children in underserved communities often have limited options for physical activity.^{3,4} In a national survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, fewer Latino (70%) than White (82.5%) respondents described their neighborhoods as having safe places for children to play.⁵ A study conducted in Southern California found that children of racial/ethnic minorities living in poverty have less access to parks and physical activity sites than children living in more advantaged neighborhoods.⁴ Addressing these disparities by providing sufficient access to recreation facilities may help Latino children become more physically active and maintain a healthy weight.

Because low-income neighborhoods generally have few parks and recreation sites, school facilities can provide safe areas for children to play outside of regular school hours. Several objectives, such as those developed by Healthy People 2020 are aimed at increasing access to school facilities and other public properties; however, research suggests that more progress is needed.^{6,7} Shared use agreements (SUAs) are formal contracts between government entities, usually a school and a city or county, that outline the terms and conditions for the shared use of public property or facilities.^{8,9} Street-scale improvements (e.g., repairing sidewalks and installing street lights and bike lanes) that promote walking and bicycling may help make schools and other recreation sites more accessible for Latino families and children.¹⁰

This research review summarizes the current literature on the implementation of SUAs and street-scale improvements to increase physical activity among Latino children in underserved communities.

Methodology

For this comprehensive research review, electronic searches of PubMed, Google Scholar, and government and organization websites were performed to identify literature that was relevant to the implementation of SUAs and street-scale

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improvements to increase physical activity among Latino children, defined as individuals younger than 18.¹¹ Combinations of the following keywords and MeSH terms were used: adolescent, child, Hispanic Americans, shared use agreement, Latino, legislation, liability, Mexican Americans, motor activity, obesity, physical activity, recreation, and schools.

Included in this review were studies, policy statements, and legislation published between 2000 and 2012 that address childhood obesity, physical activity, schools, recreation facilities, SUAs, and street-scale improvements in underserved and Latino communities. Exclusion criteria included articles written in non-English language, studies conducted outside the United States, narrative reviews, and editorials. Titles and abstracts were reviewed for relevance and inclusion/exclusion criteria. Full text was obtained for relevant articles meeting the inclusion criteria. Additional literature was found through hand searches of the bibliographies of articles captured through the initial electronic searches. All findings were reported, including those that were contradictory.

The literature identified for this review is comprised primarily of survey-based research (interviews and questionnaires) and reports that were not in the scientific literature. Although some of the surveys had low response rates, available data provide useful considerations and strategies for increasing community access to physical activity facilities. The literature on SUAs in Latino communities was comprised primarily of case studies that did not formally analyze the effectiveness of SUAs on increasing physical activity levels among Latino children. However, SUAs are highly relevant to Latino communities, and information on the challenges and solutions to creating the SUAs may be helpful for communities that are interesting in establishing a SUA.

Key Research Results

- Latino children living in underserved communities in the United States have limited access to recreation sites. Increasing access to recreation sites may increase physical activity among Latino children in these communities.
- Although national data suggest that there has been limited progress made to share school rec
- Recreational facilities with community members, some Latino communities have implemented SUAs and succeeded in providing residents with more access to recreational facilities.
- Liability concerns are among the top barriers to sharing school physical activity facilities with community members. SUAs, improved statutory liability protections, and increased awareness about the protections afforded to schools may encourage schools to open their facilities to the community during non-school hours.
- Funding and staffing also are among the top barriers to providing access to physical activity programs for Latino children. Sharing costs and staff through SUAs can overcome these barriers and increase access to physical activity facilities.

Increased support and feedback from all stakeholders may increase the use of SUAs in Latino communities.

- Increased support and feedback from all stakeholders may increase the use of SUAs in Latino communities.
- Characteristics of neighborhoods and the built environment may affect how frequently children and families walk or bike to sites available for recreation and physical activity. Addressing the environmental factors that hinder active travel to such sites may increase physical activity among Latino children.
- Multi-dimensional tools for assessing the impact of the built environment on physical activity are crucial for planning recreation facilities that meet the needs of Latino communities and increasing the use of the facilities among Latino children in underserved communities.

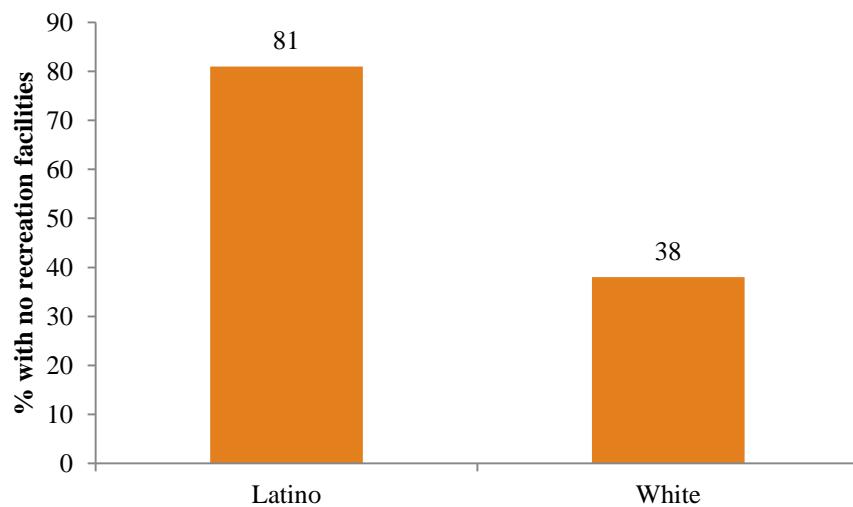
Studies Supporting Key Research Results

Latino children living in underserved communities in the United States have limited access to recreation sites. Increasing access to recreation sites may increase physical activity among Latino children in these communities.

Children in underserved communities often have insufficient access to physical activity facilities.^{12, 13, 14, 15, 16} A study investigating the availability of recreational resources in three diverse areas of the United States found that Latino neighborhoods were less likely to have recreational facilities than White neighborhoods.³ Approximately 81 percent of Latino neighborhoods and 38 percent of White neighborhoods did not have a recreational facility (Figure 1).

The City Project in Southern California found that children of racial/ethnic minorities living in poverty have less access to parks and physical activity sites than children living in more advantaged neighborhoods.⁴ For example, in Los Angeles County (44.6% Latino), low-income urban districts with high percentages of racial/ethnic minorities had only 0.68 total park acres per 1,000 people, while districts comprised primarily of wealthy, White residents had 1,587 total park acres per 1,000 people. Similar results were found in the other counties studied.

In addition to efforts that focus on increasing the number of parks and other recreation facilities in underserved areas, creative approaches to the use, re-use, or improvement of existing community areas may also increase physical activity resources in available to underserved children. A recent review by Active Living Research found that children are more physically active when they have access to school recreational facilities outside of school hours.¹⁷

Figure 1**Percentage of Latino and White Neighborhoods with No Access to a Recreation Facility**

Data source: Moore LV, Diez Roux AV, Evenson KR, McGinn AP, and Brines SJ, Availability of Recreational Resources in Minority and Low Socioeconomic Status Areas. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 2008. 34(1): p. 16-22.

Latino communities are aiming to increase opportunities for physical activity by improving access to schools and other sites within the community that can be used for physical activity. One such approach was the Active Living Logan Square program developed in an urban Chicago community with a predominantly Latino population (71%).¹⁶ Among other community-based goals, the program aimed to create safe, inviting places for physical activity in the community by connecting neighboring communities with an Open Streets model, where four miles of Chicago streets connecting three inner-city communities were closed to motorized vehicles to allow residents to engage in physical activity. The program was modeled after a program in Bogota, Colombia, called *Ciclovia* (Spanish for “bike path”). Since the start of the pilot program, more than 10,000 residents from five diverse communities have participated. The success of Open Streets has led to additional pilot programs in Chicago and other cities. In 2013, a number of Open Streets events will be held in other Latino communities in Chicago, such as Pilsen (93.5% Latino), Little Village (83% Latino), and Lincoln Square (26.5% Latino). Other aspects of the Active Living Logan Square program included installing parks and bike racks at the local schools and the development of the Bloomingdale Trail, a rails-to-trails project aimed at creating a recreation trail on an old rail line and four pocket parks that will serve as access points to the trail. Community residents are involved in the design of the trail and parks. In October 2011, more than 150 community residents, leaders and stakeholders participated in a workshop to create the first phase of the Bloomingdale

Trail Framework Plan. Key participants in the workshop were youth leaders from the “After School Matters” program.¹⁸ The program is a successful, creative model to improve the safety of the existing environments and facilitate physical activity communities with many Latino residents.

Another creative approach for identifying alternative sites for physical activity in the community is “Photovoice,” a research project that involved the use of cameras by teens and adults (87% Latino) to document barriers to physical activity in the community and bring awareness of the issues to the local policy-makers.¹⁹ The project led to several policy changes in the community, including modifications to the school bus routes to add a stop at the local YMCA and reopening of two city pools.

Although national data suggest that there has been limited progress made to share school recreational facilities with community members, some Latino communities have implemented SUAs and succeeded in providing residents with more access to recreational facilities.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) developed the Healthy People initiative to improve the health of the U.S. population.²⁰ The initiative involves the development of goals and objectives with 10-year targets. One of the goals for Health People 2010 was to increase the access to school physical activity facilities during non-school hours, with a goal of having 50 percent of U.S. schools providing access by 2010.²¹ According to DHHS data,²¹ fewer schools provided access to their physical activity facilities in 2006 (29%) than the baseline in 2000 (35%), which translates to a -17.5 percent change, although the difference was not statistically significant.

The School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) sought to assess the progress made toward the Healthy People 2010 objective by analyzing the proportion of U.S. schools providing access to physical activity spaces and facilities in 2000 and 2006.⁷ Among the schools that reported having physical activity facilities, approximately two-thirds provided access to children and adolescents during non-school time for community-sponsored sports activities, but only one-third provided access for community-sponsored classes, lessons, or supervised open gym/free play. These percentages did not change significantly between 2000 and 2006. Correlations were observed when comparing neighborhood location and income levels. Urban communities were more likely than non-urban communities to have access to schools for supervised open gym/freeplay, and high-poverty areas were more likely than low-poverty areas to have access to schools for unsupervised use of outdoor facilities.

Despite the limited progress suggested by those data, some Latino communities have successfully increased access to physical activity facilities through the implementation of SUAs—formal contracts between entities that outline the terms and conditions for sharing public facilities for physical activities. In particular, great strides have been made in the state of California, which is 38.1 percent Latino. Table 1 provides a snapshot of some of these programs. The challenges each group faced,

along with potential solutions, are described in the sections that follow.

Understanding barriers and solutions to creating SUAs is necessary for developing and implementing these agreements on a wider scale. Toolkits and resources for creating SUAs are available for communities that are interested in establishing them (Table 2).

Liability concerns are among the top barriers to sharing school physical activity facilities with community members. SUAs, improved statutory liability protections, and increased awareness about the protections afforded to schools may encourage schools to open their facilities to the community during non-school hours.

Studies suggest that liability concerns are among the key barriers to providing community access to school physical activity facilities.^{22, 23} SUAs and other agreements provide liability protection for school districts that open their facilities for public use, but school administrators are often unaware of the protections afforded to them by such agreements.

In a survey sent to 1,714 public schools in underserved communities in 46 states and completed by personnel from 360 eligible schools (32% were in Latino communities), 82.2 percent of respondents indicated that they were somewhat to very concerned about the liability associated with recreation- or sport-related injuries occurring on school property during non-school hours.²⁴ Among the schools that did not allow access to school grounds for recreational purposes, 91 percent stated that liability was somewhat to very concerning, and 85.7 percent desired stronger legislation to protect schools from liability. Interestingly, only 41 percent of respondents were familiar with legislation that limited the liability of public schools in their state. The majority of respondents believed that stronger legislation was needed, regardless of their familiarity with state law or whether their school had been subject to a previous liability claim. Among the schools that reported having formal legal agreements in place for the use of their facilities during non-school hours, only 44.8 percent of respondents perceived the protections to be adequate and only 14.6 percent would agree to sharing their facilities with other groups in the absence of a formal legal agreement. It is important to note that this study was limited by a low response rate (21%), although no demographic differences were found between schools that responded and those that did not.

Although liability is a concern among school administrators, studies have found that schools would be reasonably protected from liability associated with providing facility access to the community.^{23, 25} In a systematic review of the legal rules associated with land usage in the 50 states and the District of Columbia, investigators sought to identify the potential liability for schools that provide access to their grounds for recreational activity during non-school hours. Data suggest that public schools in all states are protected by some form of sovereign or governmental immunity, recreational use statutes, or limits on tort damages. Although some liability risk remains in certain circumstances, the investigators concluded that the

risks to schools do not outweigh the benefits of providing facility access to children who may be at risk of obesity.²⁵

Other studies have evaluated the protections afforded to schools by recreational user statutes. One review revealed that statutes from 42 states were potentially applicable to schools, although many lacked uniformity and well-defined descriptions of covered activities.²³ Among the 42 states, most (82%) statutes used broad terms to define the activities for which schools would not be held liable and none referenced indoor facilities specifically. For example, in states with large Latino populations, language that describes activities for which schools would be protected from liability include many which may be difficult to interpret: “winter sports” (California), “enjoying nature” (Texas), “recreational activities” (New Jersey and New Mexico), and “exercise” (Arizona). Only a few states indicate specific activities such as “bicycling” (Colorado, New York, and Texas) and rollerblading or rollerskating (Colorado, New Jersey). Because such broad terminology would require interpretation by the courts, it could potentially expose schools to liability. As such, including uniform and specific provisions for all relevant recreational and physical activities in state laws may better protect schools and encourage them to share their facilities during non-school hours.

These studies demonstrate a need for improved legislation and increased awareness of statutory protections afforded to schools. Although most states have some form of statute that allows for use of public facilities by the community, only 20 statutes provide for the shared establishment or shared use of school property/facilities.⁸ School districts considering a SUA should become aware of their state laws on shared use. ChangeLab Solutions has compiled related laws in all 50 states (<http://bit.ly/XTtIqE>).

Funding and staffing also are among the top barriers to providing access to physical activity programs for Latino children. Sharing costs and staff through SUAs can overcome these barriers and increase access to physical activity facilities.

In a survey of directors of 44 recreation centers in San Diego County (32.5% Latino), 54 percent indicated “inadequate staffing” and 39 percent indicated “funding” as primary barriers to offering physical activity programming for youths.²⁶

Partnerships through SUAs can overcome these barriers by sharing costs and staffing.^{27,28,29} For example, for the SUA established at the Cajon Valley Union Elementary School District in San Diego (25.6% Latino), each partner who uses school facilities provides their own staffing, supervision, and security, and is responsible for operational costs associated with their programming. The school district is responsible for staff and costs associated with facility maintenance.²⁸ Staff turnover was a major challenge for the Healthy High Desert SUA in Adelanto, Calif. (58.3% Latino). To overcome this barrier, the city and school district applied for additional grants and recruited staff with experience and genuine interest in making the SUA work.⁹

Funding and staffing also are among the top barriers to providing access to physical activity programs for Latino children. Sharing costs and staff through SUAs can overcome these barriers and increase access to physical activity facilities.

Increased support and feedback from all stakeholders may increase the use of SUAs in underserved communities.

Despite the challenges associated with establishing SUAs in underserved communities, some barriers may be overcome if all stakeholders have a voice in developing the agreement and its resulting programs. School districts, planners, community members, public health officials, and other partners should be involved early in the process to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met. To increase participation among the Latino community, language barriers must be considered. Bilingual facilitators and Spanish-language materials should be available at all stakeholder meetings.

Several case studies have cited cooperation among stakeholders as the main contributor to the success of a SUA. In a case study of a pilot SUA between the Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and an urban high school in Honolulu, Hawaii, increased support of school administrators and feedback from school and DPR staff, students, and community members facilitated the development of a successful physical activity program in the community. Specific factors were noted as being instrumental in the program's success, including: trust and effective communication among school administration, faculty and DPR staff; willingness of school administrators to accommodate project needs, such as office space, communication systems, storage space for equipment, and administrative assistance; feedback from students, faculty, staff, and community members about the type and timing of activities; and targeted recruitment based on feedback. Although this study involved a high school with a very small Latino population (1.1%), the majority of students enrolled in the school are of ethnic minority background and lower socioeconomic status. Therefore, findings may offer strategies that could be successfully applied in other underserved areas of the country.²⁷

In the Fruitvale neighborhood (46% Latino) of Oakland, Calif., the success of a SUA has been attributed to strong relationships between stakeholders. Public officials, school administrators, and community members have collaborated with the Unity Council, a nonprofit community development agency, to offer evening sports leagues on school grounds for more than 500 youths. Outreach was critical to engaging the community and instilling a sense of ownership in the program.²⁸

A program in the Boyle Heights (94% Latino) and Pico-Union (92% Latino) neighborhoods in Los Angeles, Calif., called Joint Use Generating Activity and Recreation (JUGAR), brought together community stakeholders and public agencies to increase access to public space for physical activity. Effective engagement of school administrators and community partners ensured that all stakeholders understood the needs of the community and the terms of the agreement, which led to JUGAR's success.⁹

In the case of the SUA in Adelanto, Calif., (58.3% Latino), the city and school district had an existing shared use policy, but the terms and conditions were not well

delineated. Staff and partners of the Healthy High Desert program provided education and discussion on the importance of the formal SUA to address concerns and clarify expectations and responsibilities. The productive discussions among the stakeholders led to the development of a successful SUA.⁹

Characteristics of neighborhoods and the built environment may affect how frequently children and families walk or bike to sites available for recreation and physical activity. Addressing the factors that hinder active travel to such sites may increase physical activity among Latino children.

Characteristics of neighborhoods and the built environment—man-made features in the community, such as sidewalks, streets, and buildings—may prevent Latino children from using physical activity sites (Table 3).^{30, 31, 32, 33} In a survey of parents and adolescents from three U.S. metropolitan areas (10% of participants were Latino), proximity to home and easy access to the site by walking/biking were significantly associated with more frequent use of the sites by children and adolescents. On multivariate analysis, higher perceived traffic safety, better pedestrian infrastructure, and low crime were significantly associated with more frequent walking/biking to a recreation site ($P < 0.01$ for all).³²

Proximity was also found to be associated with physical activity in a study of 3,451 adolescents (34.1% Latino) who responded to the 2005 California Health Interview Survey.³⁴ Proximity to school was associated with increased active transport to school. Adolescents who lived less than 3,200 meters (about 2 miles) from school were more likely to walk, bike, or skateboard to school than those who lived more than 3,200 meters away. The authors recommend building schools near residential areas with the highest concentration of students to encourage more walking and biking to school.

Another study investigated the relationship between the built environment and physical activity in 14 unincorporated settlements, called *colonias*, in Hidalgo County, Texas.³⁵ After conducting focus groups with 97 children and parents, 101 surveys of children, audits of 125 streets and 1,000 lots, researchers found that the features of the built environment were related to physical activity levels in children. During the focus group sessions, children noted several factors that could improve their levels of physical activity, including the construction of walking areas, parks, sports and recreation areas, and basketball courts; installation of swings and street lights; and increased police presence in the area. Unpleasant neighborhood conditions, such as trash-filled and muddy streets, bad outdoor odors, dilapidated playgrounds, unleashed dogs, gangs, and speeding cars prohibit children from being active. Data from the street audits found that more than 91 percent of the *colonia* streets lacked sidewalks, none had pedestrian signs, and only one had a crosswalk sign. Other features that were lacking were “Children at Play” signs, shoulders, stop signs, speed bumps, and speed limit signs.

As mentioned previously, neighborhood crime may influence active transport in Latino communities. A study investigating physical activity and outdoor recreation

among 390 Latino children in the South Lawndale community of Chicago (83% Latino: 92% Mexican American), also referred to as Little Village, found that Latino children in the area are often exposed to violent crime in the neighborhood, as a witness and/or victim,³⁶ and their fear of crime negatively impacts their levels of physical activity and outdoor recreation. The participants reported decreased use of parks or locations requiring them to cross gang boundaries and less participation in after-dark activities, with some children not participating in any physical activity due to safety concerns. Other research from U.S. urban areas has also documented that Latino children are more likely to live in unsafe areas.³⁷

Implementing street-scale improvements, such as improving neighborhood infrastructure, and facilitating safe routes for active travel may help address many of these barriers and promote physical activity among children in underserved communities. The National Complete Streets Coalition aims to improve the conditions of neighborhood streets for safer use by pedestrians and bicyclists, and many states, cities, and towns are adopting Complete Streets planning policies.³⁸ Efforts also are underway in Latino communities, such as Santa Ana and Los Angeles, California.^{39, 40}

The Safe Routes to School National Partnership provides resources for increasing the safety of neighborhood streets to facilitate walking and biking in underserved communities.⁴¹ A case study describes the implementation of the Safe Routes to School program at Maybury Elementary School in southwest Detroit (approximately 600 students, nearly 90% Latino).¹⁰ During the program planning phase, feedback from parents was sought and “walking audits” were conducted to identify factors that may be inhibiting active transport to school. Improvements in infrastructure were made to address the identified physical barriers, such as decaying sidewalks and poor lighting. Geographic Information System (GIS) maps generated from several forms of computerized geographical data and crime data for the neighborhood were used to identify the safest routes to school, and a walking school bus program, led by parent volunteers, was implemented on those routes, which increased the number of students who walked to school.

Multi-dimensional tools for assessing the impact of the built environment on physical activity are crucial for planning recreation facilities that meet the needs of Latino communities and increasing use of the facilities among Latino children in underserved communities.

Identifying characteristics that make existing recreation facilities successful can inform the planning of future facilities conducive to physical activity. Tools are available for assessing the built environment, but research suggests that current measures need improvement to capture all important factors that influence the use of the built environment in underserved communities.^{42, 33}

The Physical Activity Resource Assessment (PARA) is a multi-dimensional instrument that rates recreation sites on their features, amenities, and incivilities (e.g., litter, unattended dogs, evidence of substance or alcohol use, vandalism).⁴³ A study

investigating the utility of the PARA for planning physical activity interventions in two economically disadvantaged urban neighborhoods (62.4% ethnic minorities) in Tampa, Fla., found that collecting qualitative data in addition to PARA data captured issues such as transportation barriers, interest, and convenience that were not captured by the instrument alone.⁴² To identify all important factors that may influence the use of a recreation facility, the investigators recommend adding qualitative assessments, such as interviews with parent-child dyads, to obtain feedback about other non-physical factors related to the use of the facility.

One research group reported on the utility of multi-dimensional neighborhood profiles as a tool to evaluate the built environment in 12 primarily low-income, urban Latino communities (26% to 79% Latino) in Pima County, Arizona.⁴⁴ The tool incorporated secondary data, including census data and GIS maps; observational assessments with selected portions of existing tools, including the PARA, the Community Health Index and the Americans with Disabilities Act Bus Stop Accessibilities Study; interviews with neighborhood connectors (e.g., community representatives); and community surveys. Although secondary data provided useful objective information on infrastructure and community resources, observational assessments, interviews and surveys were crucial for identifying the actual needs of the community. For example, secondary data indicated the presence of a recreation site, but the observational assessment revealed the accessibility of the site to the public (e.g., opened vs. locked gates), and the community surveys indicated the residents' awareness about the availability of the site.

When gathering community feedback, assessing cultural factors may help to identify characteristics of the built environment or recreation program that would be important to the Latino community and thus persuade them to engage in physical activity. For example, a study surveyed 303 Latinos to assess cultural factors about their outdoor recreation compared with other populations.⁴⁵ Survey results suggested that family, community, and personalization were the most valued and influential cultural factors among Latinos. Therefore, to attract Latinos to outdoor recreation, investigators concluded that programs should include family- and community-based activities that leverage the strong personal relationships among Latinos. Community mentors and leaders could also help to engage residents in the activities.

These studies have important implications for planners of physical activity facilities. Appropriate measures and multiple measures, including feedback from community members, should be incorporated into the assessment of the built environment to better inform decisions about building new environments or improving existing environments in Latino communities. If surveys are used, they should be developed in English and Spanish and pilot-tested to increase the response rate and optimize comprehension among respondents. Marketing the research project to the Latino community may also increase participation.

Conclusions and Policy Implications

CONCLUSIONS

- Latino children in underserved communities have few options for physical activity and inadequate access to recreation facilities. Many avenues and resources exist to increase access to recreation facilities among Latino children.
- Interim data on the Healthy People 2010 initiative suggest that minimal progress was made in increasing access to school physical activity facilities in underserved communities from 2000 to 2006. However, in recent years, SUAs have been successfully implemented in some Latino communities, and these initiatives may serve as models for other Latino communities.
- Liability associated with allowing community access to school facilities is a primary concern among school administrators. While most states afford protections to school districts that share facilities with the community and many allow for recreational user statutes or SUAs, the language about what activities are covered is often unclear. Improved legislation and increased awareness of statutory protections for schools are needed to reduce concerns about liability and increase public access to school facilities.
- Incorporating the views of all stakeholders in developing SUAs may increase stakeholder support and ownership, leading to successful physical activity programs in Latino communities.
- Limited funding and inadequate staffing complicate development of physical activity programs for Latino children in underserved communities. SUAs provide means for sharing costs and staff, which may increase access to physical activity facilities and programs in Latino communities.
- The use of physical activity or recreation sites by Latino children is dependent on several factors associated with neighborhood characteristics and the built environment, such as conditions that inhibit walking and biking (e.g., decaying sidewalks, lack of street connectivity, poor lighting, and perceived crime levels). Street-scale improvements (e.g., repairing sidewalks and installing bike lanes and street lights) can address concerns about environmental barriers and improve perceptions of the built environment, potentially increasing levels of physical activity among Latino children in the community.
- To promote use of physical activity or recreation sites, appropriate measures must be used to assess the built environment and ensure that new and existing areas for physical activity meet the specific cultural needs of the Latino community.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this review have several implications for legislators, policy-makers, school administrators, and community members. Efforts should focus on meeting the following needs to increase access to physical activity sites and facilities in Latino underserved communities:

- State and local governments should work with school administrators to address liability and other concerns for schools that pave the way for access to their facilities for recreational use during non-school hours.

- State and local governments should ensure that SUAs and other statutes specifically describe covered activities, terms and conditions.
- State and local governments should encourage awareness of current statutes and adoption of SUAs among school administrators.
- Local governments and policymakers should solicit community feedback to strengthen the development of new recreation sites and implementation of street-scale improvements.
- Local governments and policymakers should create Complete Streets policies for all new transportation projects near schools and recreation sites to improve active travel to those sites.

FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS

To increase access to physical activity sites in Latino communities, further research is needed on the effectiveness of SUAs for increasing physical activity in Latino communities. Many of the communities with SUAs have reported on challenges and solutions to implementing a SUA, but none provided data on the impact of SUAs on physical activity levels. Therefore, to encourage the implementation of SUAs in more Latino communities, more data are needed to support their effectiveness in increasing physical activity among Latino children. Real and perceived barriers to implementing SUAs should be further explored to identify areas for improvement in policies and legislation and to educate stakeholders on how to overcome the barriers. Specifically, research that documents the cost associated with implementing SUAs for each stakeholder would be beneficial. Finally, research is needed to evaluate the quality of tools that are used for measuring the built environment and their applicability to Latino communities to ensure that decisions about street-scale improvements and physical activity sites are well informed and in the best interest of the Latino community.

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Salud America! The RWJF Research Network to Prevent Obesity Among Latino Children is a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The program aims to educate and support researchers, decision-makers, community leaders, and the public in contributing towards healthier Latino communities and seeking environmental and policy solutions to the epidemic of Latino childhood obesity. The network is directed by the Institute for Health Promotion Research at The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio.

For more information, visit <http://www.salud-america.org>.

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH REVIEW

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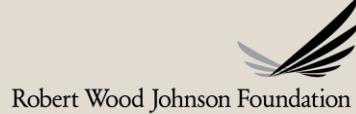


Table 1
Shared Use Agreements (SUAs) Implemented in Latino Communities in California

Program	Location	Involved Parties	Shared Facility	More information
Healthy High Desert	Adelanto, CA	School district city government, including the parks and recreation department	Park developed on previously vacant 5-acre lot adjacent to new elementary school	http://www.jointuse.org/community-4/san-bernardino/
Fremont Wellness Center & Community Garden	South Los Angeles, CA	The Land Trust, University Muslim Medical Student Association and Los Angeles Unified School District	A 2,500-square-foot clinic, greenhouse, gardens, orchard and playground were developed on an abandoned 1.5-acre lot	http://www.jointuse.org/community-4/south-los-angeles-fremont-high-school/ http://www.landtrustalliance.org/about/saving-land/fall-2012/power-of-place
Healthy For Life	Central San Joaquin Valley, CA	Central California Obesity Prevention Program, Healthy For Life	Shared use of Pixley Elementary School and Earlimart Elementary School Schools were opened for use on weekends and summer months providing access to a vacant classroom, soccer field and basketball court	http://www.jointuse.org/community-4/central-valley/
RENEW LA County (Renew Environments for Nutrition, Exercise & Wellness in Los Angeles County)	Los Angeles County, CA	CDC – CPPW program, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health and local schools	Shared use of local schools	http://www.jointuse.org/community-4/los-angeles/

JUGAR (Joint Use Generating Activity and Recreation)	Boyle Heights, CA	RENEW LA and ABC (Alliance for a Better Community)	Shared use of local schools to provide access to dance rooms for Zumba classes, soccer fields and open space for walking clubs	http://www.jointuse.org/community-4/boyleheights/
Oakland Schoolyard Initiative (OSI)	Oakland, CA	Oakland Unified School District	Revitalized 10 schoolyards and adjacent parks to create vibrant, safe places for children to play	www.cpehn.org/pdfs/Joint%20Use%20Brief.pdf
Cajon Valley Middle School	San Diego County, CA	Cajon Valley Unified School District and El Cajon Redevelopment Agency	A new gymnasium/multipurpose building at Cajon Valley Middle School was built to allow public use of the building and fields	www.cpehn.org/pdfs/Joint%20Use%20Brief.pdf
Neighborhood Sports Initiative	Fruitvale, Oakland, CA	Unity Council, Oakland Fund for Children and Youth and Team Up for Youth	The initiative coordinates sports leagues for youth at the Cesar Chavez Education Center	www.cpehn.org/pdfs/Joint%20Use%20Brief.pdf
Spring Valley RED Club	San Diego County, CA	San Diego County, La Mesa-Spring Valley School District	Constructed a library, gym and teen center on the La Presa Middle School campus	www.cpehn.org/pdfs/Joint%20Use%20Brief.pdf

Table 2
Toolkits and Resources for Developing Shared Use Agreements

Organization	Title	Website
ChangeLab Solutions (formerly Public Health Law & Policy)	Playing Smart: Maximizing the Potential of School and Community Property Through Joint Use Agreements	http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/playing-smart
	Opening School Grounds to the Community After Hours: A Toolkit for Increasing Physical Activity Through Joint Use Agreements	http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/CA-JUA-toolkit
	Checklist for Developing a Joint Use Agreement	http://changelabsolutions.org/publications/checklist-developing-joint-use-agreement-jua
Center for Cities & Schools, the University of California, Berkley	Partnerships for Joint Use: Expanding the Use of Public School Infrastructure to Benefit Students and Communities	http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/pubs.html
	Joint Use of Public Schools: A Framework for a New Social Contract	http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/pubs.html

Table 3
Factors that Influence the Use of Physical Activity Sites³³

Domain	Elements	Indicators
Functional	Walking surface	Availability and accessibility of competitive transport alternatives and infrastructures (e.g., transit, sidewalks, bike lanes)
	Street	Availability of local government and highway funds for sidewalks and bike lanes
	Traffic	Frequency of nonmotorized transportation (variation by trip purpose and/or trip distance)
	Permeability	Presence of integration between residential and commercial land use in dense population areas
Safety	Personal	Presence of protective social factors and absence of social disorder
	Traffic	
Aesthetics	Streetscape	Presence of attractions and comforts as well as absence of physical disorder
	Views	
Destination	Facilities	Availability and accessibility of facilities or natural features for activity
		Availability of local government funds for parks and recreation facilities
Other		Presence of community wide campaigns to increase active living

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