



A joint use agreement is a formal agreement between two separate government entities—often a school district and a city or county—setting forth the terms and conditions for the shared use of public property or facilities.

What Is a Joint Use Agreement?

A Fact Sheet for Parents, Students, and Community Members

Many communities lack safe, adequate places for children and their families to exercise and play. Schools might have a variety of recreational facilities—gymnasiums, playgrounds, fields, courts, tracks—but many districts close their property to the public after school hours because of concerns about costs, vandalism, security, maintenance, and liability in the event of injury.

Most states currently have laws that encourage or even require schools to open their facilities to the community for recreation or other civic uses.¹ Nonetheless, school officials may be reluctant to do so, cautious about the expense in times of increasingly tight budgets.

The good news is that city, county, and town governments can partner with school districts through what are known as joint use agreements to address these concerns.



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TO PREVENT CHILDHOOD OBESITY

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In San Francisco, for instance, the city and school district used a joint use agreement to open school playgrounds to the community on weekends. In Seattle, the city and school district implemented a more complex joint use agreement to centralize the scheduling of all school and city recreation facilities, making them more accessible and easier to reserve. In some communities, schools and cities have partnered to build new recreational facilities for schools and neighborhoods.

Joint use agreements allow school districts to share with local government the costs and responsibilities incurred by opening their facilities. Subject to overriding state and local laws, the agreements can allocate to local government some or all of the responsibility for costs, security, supervision, maintenance, repairs, and potential liability.

With thoughtful planning, joint use agreements can play an important role in increasing recreational opportunities for children and their families. Parents and community members can get involved by urging school officials (including school board members) and city or county officials to pursue a joint use agreement that would make school facilities more widely accessible.



Photos by Lydia Daniller

Visit www.changelabsolutions.org/childhood-obesity/joint-use to learn more about joint use agreements.

- *Checklist for Developing a Joint Use Agreement*
- *Playing Smart: Maximizing the Potential of School and Community Property through Joint Use Agreements (National Toolkit)*
- *Opening School Grounds to the Community After Hours: A Toolkit for Increasing Physical Activity Through Joint Use Agreements (California toolkit)*
- *Model Joint Use Agreements (California and national versions)*
- *Model Joint Use Resolution*
- *A Fifty-State Scan of Laws Addressing Community Use of Schools*
- *Liability Risks for After-Hours Use of Public School Property: A Fifty-State Survey*

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¹ See, e.g., California Education Code §§ 38131, 38133, 18134 [establishing a civic center at each public school facility for supervised recreation activities]; Indiana Code §§ 20-26-8-1, 2 [requiring the school board of trustees to provide recreation activities upon petition by a sufficient number of voters], Maryland Education Code § 7-108-110 [requiring county boards to provide school facilities for use for civic or other recreation purposes].