

Physical

Seven Dimensions of Well-Being Spotlight



NATIONAL
RECREATION AND PARK
ASSOCIATION

The Vision

Communities provide environments, programs and services that promote opportunities for all people to be physically active, safe, have access to nutritious and affordable food, and have access to quality healthcare. All community members can easily and safely access opportunities that support the development of healthy eating, physical activity, rest, self-care habits and behaviors that support healthy bodily functions.

How Parks and Recreation Promotes Physical Well-Being

Park and recreation professionals provide and manage the essential infrastructure — spaces, facilities and other built environment features — that creates opportunities for all people to engage in behaviors and activities that improve and maintain physical health. They also provide programs that support physical well-being, such as youth and adult sports leagues, physical fitness classes, older adult programs, fun runs and walks, dance lessons, and so much more. Parks and recreation also provides opportunities for people to access healthy, fresh, and affordable foods and health education, and they act as emergency shelters and cooling centers during times of extreme heat and emergencies. They also provide programming aimed at improving community safety and violence prevention.

Examples of Advancing Physical Well-Being

- Provide a wide variety of inclusive physical activity programs, including evidence-based chronic disease management programs, youth sports, adaptive sports, outdoor recreation and group exercise classes.
- Advocate for the equitable development and improvement of parks, trails, sports facilities, recreation centers and other community design enhancements.
- Establish equitable permitting and fee structures to ensure that community members can access sports fields, courts and facilities fairly and participate in leagues (i.e., provide scholarships and equipment).
- Train youth sports coaches and park and recreation staff on positive youth development.
- Develop wellness policies for recreation centers and programs to ensure healthy eating and physical activity standards are in place (e.g., all youth in afterschool programs participate in least 60 minutes of physical activity).
- Provide nutrition education, healthy meals and snacks, and food distribution services.
- Sponsor community events that raise awareness and encourage physical activity like a 5K event, swim or bike safety week, or bike-to-work event.
- Ensure play spaces and fitness equipment are accessible and inclusive.
- Conduct a movability assessment of local parks, trails and public spaces to address access barriers and create safe routes to destinations across the community.
- Develop an employee well-being initiative.

In Practice

As one of the largest park districts and providers of youth programming nationally, Chicago Park District understands the dire need to center health equity and meet the needs and interests of its community members. By forging collaborations with stakeholders and promoting physical activity, the district aims to enhance the well-being of its diverse community.

As part of its youth programming, the Chicago Park District integrates a minimum of 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity in out-of-school time (OST) programs to reduce chronic disease.

Internally, the department invests in employee well-being by offering free fitness center access and fitness programs. Externally, the Fitness Rx program offers adult patrons compensated three-month fitness center memberships for those who present a prescription for obesity-related disease.

Through partnerships, physical activity promotion and employee well-being initiatives, the district fosters a healthier and inclusive community.

Learn more: bit.ly/Chicago-In-Practice



A youth participant creates a smoothie using a blender bike. Photo courtesy of Chicago Park District.

Learn more about the seven dimensions of well-being by visiting nrapa.org/CommunityWellnessHubs