

Statewide Plan to Promote Youth Physical Activity in Michigan During the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond

Physical activity opportunities for children and youth are limited due to the current COVID-19 pandemic

Physical activity is one of the most effective ways to promote mental and physical health, prevent disease, and most importantly in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, bolster a strong immune system. Efforts to flatten the curve have resulted in the temporary closure of exercise facilities and gyms, suspension of sport activities, and advisories to children and families to avoid public recreational spaces. All of these recent changes have made traditional opportunities to be physically active difficult to access for our children and youth.

Not all children and youth have a safe place to be active outside of school

Existing disparities in access to social and environmental supports for physical activity have been further exacerbated by school closures, potentially contributing to a widening gap in physical activity participation among those at greatest risk for COVID-19. For disadvantaged youth, school closures eliminate opportunities to engage in structured exercise as many of these youth lack safe spaces to exercise or play sports in their neighborhoods. For children with disabilities, school closures eliminate access to inclusive physical activity, which can negatively impact their social, physical, emotional, and cognitive development. For families living in rural communities, limited internet access has made it challenging to access health education resources. Now more than ever, we need to be responsive to the current needs of our students and work together to create new opportunities for children and youth—and their families—to be active at home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Helping families stay active and healthy at home

The University of Michigan, Michigan School Health Coordinators' Association, and the Society of Health and Physical Educators, Michigan Public Health Institute, Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Elementary and Middle School Principals Association, and Playworks have partnered to disseminate *Interrupting Prolonged sitting at Home (InPACT@Home)*. *InPACT@Home* is an evidence-informed, home-based physical activity program that enables K-12 students to engage in health-enhancing physical activity. Children and youth will have access to 20-minute cardio workout videos that are developmentally appropriate and approved by pediatric exercise physiologists and physical education specialists. Videos will also include nutrition messaging, social emotional learning activities and will be accessible on smartphones, tablets, and computers. Because over 90% of Michigan households have access to a smartphone or a computer, we have the opportunity to reach children all across the state.

A call to action

As we launch *InPACT@Home* in the coming weeks, there are a number of ways in which your organization can support this program:

- Become a program partner by helping to disseminate this program to your customers and communities
- Contribute video content to inspire K-12 youth to be physically active at home
- Donate items (tickets, clothing, sports equipment) as raffle items for monthly youth physical activity awards
- Include your organization logo on *InPACT@Home* website and materials as a program partner

With your support we can achieve our goal of reaching 1.5 million K-12 students in the State of Michigan. Join us today as we strive to improve the health and well-being of Michigan children, youth, and their families.

The urgency of now

Working together to help K-12 students move more at home is more important today than ever before as physical activity is essential for human growth and development. By bringing a home-based physical activity program to every Michigan household, we can provide equitable access to health-enhancing physical activity during a time when our children and youth need it the most. With this innovative investment in our K-12 students' future, we can play a crucial role in keeping our children and youth healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.