

IT'S TIME TO LEVEL THE PLAYING FIELD FOR GIRLS

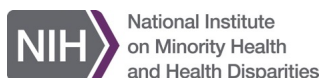
Girls are less likely to meet daily physical activity recommendations compared to boys. Schools can help girls take care of their minds and bodies through expanded physical activity programming.

Youth in the U.S. are experiencing a mental health crisis.ⁱ A physically active lifestyle is linked with better overall mental health during early adolescence and can be used as a mediator of stress from a young age.ⁱⁱ Yet, fewer than 1 in 4 school-aged youth get the recommended 60 minutes of daily physical activity, despite the physical and mental health and learning benefits it provides.ⁱⁱⁱ This challenge is especially prominent among young girls.ⁱⁱⁱ Girls living in households with lower-incomes and girls from communities of color are especially at risk.^{iv}

By age 14, girls are dropping out of sports at twice the rate of boys^v and reducing overall physical activity at higher rates than boys. Frequent barriers for adolescent girls include a lack of confidence related to physical activity/sports and their physical appearance, support from peers and teachers, resources, and role models.^{vi} Collectively, we can work together to improve the health of young girls.

We commit to taking the steps needed to support young girls' social, emotional, and physical well-being through programming that:

1. **Gives students a voice** about what they want and need from their school community.
2. Expands educational initiatives that build their **self-esteem and confidence, teach them how to properly fuel their bodies**, improve **their mindfulness and quality sleep**.
3. Provides schools and educators with educational resources to address **equity, inclusion, and accessibility issues** as well as student social and emotional well-being in the context of health, physical education and activity.
4. Offers more socially inclusive and supportive physical activity opportunities that will **sustain their participation in sports and physical activity**.



ⁱ Rico A, Brener ND, Thornton J, et al. Overview and Methodology of the Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey – United States, January–June 2021. MMWR Suppl 2022;71(Suppl-3):1–7. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su7103a1>

ⁱⁱ Dore I, O'Loughlin JL, et al. Volume and social context of physical activity in association with mental health, anxiety and depression among youth. Preventive Medicine. Vol. 91, 2019, pp. 344-350. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ypmed.2016.09.006>

ⁱⁱⁱ National Physical Activity Plan Alliance. The 2018 United States report card on physical activity for children and youth. 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.physicalactivityplan.org/projects/reportcard.html>

^{iv} Kann L, McManus T, et al. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance – United States 2017. MMWR Surveill Summ. 2018 Jun 15; 67(8): 1–114. doi: 10.15585/mmwr.ss6708a1

^v Zarrett N, Veliz PT, Sabo D. Keeping girls in the game: factors that influence sport participation. Women's Sports Foundation. 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.womenssportsfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Keeping-Girls-in-the-Game-Executive-Summary-FINAL-web.pdf>

^{vi} Duffey K, Barbosa A, et al. (2021). Barriers and Facilitators of Physical Activity Participation in Adolescent Girls: A Systematic Review of Systematic Reviews. Front. Public Health 9:743935. doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.743935>