



Connecting Parks and Public Health

Below is a listing of activities and policy, system, environment (PSE) change ideas to inspire your local SNAP-Ed work in collaboration with partners to further support identified community change goals. This list serves as a resource and is not intended to be an exhaustive or all-inclusive list; any program/organization names listed below are simply ideas, not endorsements. Always refer and adhere to the USDA SNAP-Ed Guidance to inform program allowability and seek out technical assistance from your respective State Implementing Agencies representative.

Ideas for Local SNAP-Ed and Community Partners to Encourage “Health in the Outdoors”

Promotion

- Include local hiking trails, walking loops, and playgrounds in your county’s PA Resource Directory.
- Make a bulletin board of local hikes and playgrounds for public housing complexes and community centers, including the best routes/bus lines to get there. Ask teens with graphic design skills to help.
- Hang up nature photography in waiting rooms for nudging cues & inspiration. Find a local volunteer photographer to lead a photography hike or a “how to take stunning nature pictures using your smartphone camera” class. Find a sponsor (e.g.: local bank or Rotary club) for a nature photography contest.
- July is California Park & Recreation Society’s “Parks Make Life Better!” month.
- 4th graders get free access to national parks through the Every Kid in a Park program.
- Encourage teens and adults to complete a “trails challenge” that visits a variety of trails in different parks.
- Promote water consumption and water filling stations at parks.
- Your dog is the best walking partner! Encourage children and their families to walk the dog together after dinner.
- Remind “5K fun run training groups” to include hiking as cross-training.
- Encourage bored or chatty teens to sit outside instead of staying indoors. Just sitting outside has health benefits! The sunshine, the fresh air, the greenspace.... Suggest that stressed-out adults go for a 10 minute walk during the day or eat lunch outside.

Program

- Ask your local SNAP-Ed Champion Providers to lead quarterly walks for their patients for a “Walk with a Doctor”-type program. This can also be a nurse, health educator, dietitian, lactation specialist, etc.
- Have groups (e.g.: church women’s circles, parents after morning school drop-off, worksite wellness teams, seniors, nutrition education classes, WIC moms, public housing residents) start a walking club. Use fitness apps or participate in fitness challenge programs to track and incentivize participation. Social support!
- Help “non-traditional park users” feel welcome in parks by bringing community groups to the park. Transportation an issue? Arrange carpools, use the church van, take public transit together starting from the community center, etc. Have park staff give a warm welcome, tour, and lead a nature walk. Ask if bilingual rangers are available.
- Help 6-9 year old kids get outdoors, get moving, and into nature by creating an Outdoor Program using PBS Kids’ PLUM Landing Explore Outdoors toolkit. Nature has many science and social science connections.
- Libraries are community hubs too! Connect library community programs, SNAP-Ed programs, and park programs, eg: storytime under a tree, “meet a ranger” storytime, book section about nature exploration, native foods of indigenous peoples, include tracking healthy play minutes alongside the Summer Reading Program, library-sponsored hiking clubs, summer meal program, etc.
- Power Up Your Summer with a passport stamp booklet of local family friendly outdoor activities. Work with local companies to offer discounts to the pool, mini-golf course, ice skating rink, botanical garden, bike rental, etc.
- Take your health education classes out of the indoor classroom - do nutrition education and physical activity demos throughout your walk! Host SNAP-Ed classes in a garden, park pavillion, or patio area of your office building when weather permits.
- Coordinate a “family fitness & health fair” at an underutilized park.

Policy, System, Environmental (PSE) change

- Health educators prescribe a “park prescription” and refer to existing park programs, such as Zumba or Yoga in the Park. Schedule Zumba in the Park on the same day as the farmers’ market that’s in the park so it’s easy to pick up fresh fruits & veggies after class.
- “Take back the park” with a park clean up day; work with community safety organizations and law enforcement to increase park safety. A great Boy Scout/community service project idea.
- Have youth engagement groups ask the city for a skate park or an outdoor “crossfit” fitness area. Tell the community about grants (e.g.: Kaboom, Lowe’s, many others) to build a new playground.
- Joint use agreements for access to the soccer field, basketball courts, and track. Start a walking club around the school’s track if there aren’t many safe walking areas or hiking trails nearby.
- Promote social equity by helping increase access to parks with Safe Routes to Parks, active transport, Complete Streets, and developing greenways.
- Help address food insecurity needs by connecting parks & rec staff with food security resources, such as grocery bag distribution or mobile food pantries at community parks.
- Turn that unused sunny corner of the park into a community garden. Have youth run the farmstand.
- Have community residents help design a new (or refresh an existing) park, with the amenities they’d like to see -- walking paths, playgrounds, spraygrounds, shade structures, fitness circuits, dog park, community garden, picnic area, etc. Have parent-teacher organizations fundraise to create a “green schoolyard”.
- Work with schools to stop taking away recess as punishment for bad behavior. Encourage extra recess or a walk to a local park as rewards instead of food. Detention could be transformed into a mindfulness session held outside under the trees led by staff from a local counseling center.

Technical Assistance and Training

- Provide training for evidence-based programs for seniors, such as: Walk with Ease (Arthritis Foundation), Active Living Everyday (National Council on Aging), Fit & Strong!/Fuerte y En Forma! (University of Illinois at Chicago).
- Invite, cross-train, or co-lead trainings on health & wellness (e.g.: trainings for CATCH & SPARK, healthy eating, healthy aging, early childhood physical activity skills, etc) with park & rec staff.
- Have your County Nutrition Action Plan (CNAP) group help park & rec sites become summer meal program sites or sponsors; encourage families to sign up for summer programs.
- Provide technical assistance and training on the Alliance for a Healthier Generation’s Healthy-Out-of-School-Time wellness policies and the National Park and Recreation Association’s Healthy Eating and Physical Activity standards for afterschool programs.
- Provide technical assistance on creating healthy food & beverage standards for the concession stand and vending machines.
- Provide technical assistance on creating mobile vending ordinances around parks.
- Connect food systems discussions & efforts with environmental/land conservation work.
- Share your public health data, CX3 GIS mapping skills, and community engagement skills with park & rec partners to better understand the community and its’ needs.

Have more great ideas on how SNAP-Ed can promote health in the outdoors? Let Betty Sun, Health Program Manager, bsun@parksconservancy.org, know!

To learn about the Institute at the Golden Gate’s upcoming trainings and resources, please sign up for our email list at instituteatgoldengate.org. The *ParkRx Toolkit* and a *Roadmap and Case Study for Regional Collaboration* is at the Healthy Parks, Healthy People: Bay Area website: <http://hphpbayarea.org>. Parks Prescription case studies and training webinars are at: <http://parkrx.org/>