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*Supplement social support interventions with health education.* Physical activity training also can be provided (Lombard, Lombard, and Winett 1995) through face-to-face sessions or videotaped instructions (King et al. 1988b). Programs can train people to monitor the intensity of their exercise by using the Borg Scale (Coleman et al. 1999; King et al. 1988b).

## **Creating/Enhancing Access to Places for Physical Activity, Combined with Informational Outreach Activities**

Though physical activity can be performed almost anywhere, some locations are specifically designed or intended as places for such activity, including swimming pools, soccer fields, school gymnasiums, walking trails, city parks and health clubs. A community promotes physical activity by creating or improving access to such places.

In identifying specific interventions to improve access, it is useful to imagine a place for physical activity that perfectly meets the needs of a community. The most obvious intervention to improve access is to provide such a place to a community that lacks one. Access is also improved

by eliminating barriers to a community’s use of an existing place for physical activity, such as concerns about safety. Improving existing facilities in a way that is consistent with community needs and preferences is also regarded as enhancing access. If people prefer having a walking trail with mileage markers, for example, then adding mileage markers to an existing trail will enhance access.

Of course, community facilities won’t be used unless the community is aware of them. Therefore, the recommendation also includes outreach activities that publicize places for conducting or participating in physical activity. Some specific interventions reviewed by the *Community Guide* commonly did more than informational outreach, and provided additional health promotion programmatic activities.

The *Community Guide* recommendation regarding access does not apply to interventions that change the general infrastructure of a community by changing places whose primary purpose is not related to physical activity but nonetheless offer some opportunities for it. Such interventions are addressed by other recommendations, including transportation system (insufficient evidence), street-scale community design (sufficient evidence), and community-scale urban design (sufficient evidence) (Heath et al. 2006).

### **Enhanced Access to Trails, Equipment and Programs**

***Provide a range of places for physical activity throughout the community.*** New exercise space can be provided at a community site, along with provision of exercise equipment (Henritze, Brammell, and McGloin 1992). A par course can be added to outdoor space (King et al. 1988a). A community site with exercise space can be located near a workplace (Blair et al. 1986a) or other frequently visited site, such as a community center or senior center. Access is improved by providing new equipment at existing recreation facilities (Linenger, Chesson, and Nice 1991). Opening a women’s fitness facility improves access for a specific population subgroup (Linenger, Chesson, and Nice 1991). A walking and fitness path (Brownson, Smith, and Pratt 1996), a bicycle path, or a 1.5 mile running course in the community can improve access to places for physical activity

in natural environments (Linenger, Chesson, and Nice 1991). Worksite walking paths can encourage people to walk on their own time and can be enhanced by adding places to “stop and stretch.” (Heirich et al. 1989.) Stop-and-stretch places may also include benches so that users can walk at their own pace and adults who are less fit can use the facility.

***Increase the availability of health-related activities in the community.*** The availability of physical activity classes (Henritze, Brammell, and McGloin 1992), activity clubs, or walking and low-impact aerobic programs for older adults can be increased. Availability is increased when exercise groups (Brownson, Smith, and Pratt 1996) meet at a variety of times or offer extended hours so that employees can participate in programs after the work day is over (King et al. 1988a). Health-related activities include physical activity competitions (Henritze, Brammell, and McGloin 1992) and athletic events that a subgroup of adults may enjoy (Heirich et al. 1989). Community events can provide meaningful opportunities for physical activity. For example, even though a race is a discrete one-time event, increasing the number of 5K and 10K races for walkers and runners increases access to health-related activities in a community. (One-time events also provide outlets for event organizers to publicize other physical activity opportunities, such as community walking trails or bicycle paths, or parks and recreational programs.) Communities have sponsored annual, heart-healthy fitness festivals that include exercise demonstrations; registration for exercise classes and walking clubs; and screenings for hypertension, diabetes and cholesterol (Brownson, Smith, and Pratt 1996). Communities have also promoted opportunities for simple physical activities that adults undertake at their own convenience and pace while socializing with friends (Heirich et al. 1989).

## **Health Education and Informational Outreach**

***At the work place, educate employees about health risk factors and the availability of facilities and programs for physical activity.*** A variety of materials can inform employees about opportunities for physical activity, and encourage them to participate. These materials include individual invitations, electronic messages via employees’

computers, poster displays throughout the workplace, and displays of tray mats and table tents in the employee cafeteria (Henritze, Brammell, and McGloin 1992). Newsletters, health fairs, contests and information displays in cafeterias, hallways and restrooms can promote opportunities for physical activity as part of highly visible health education and promotion campaigns (Blair et al. 1986a). Materials may provide information about regular exercise (Blair et al. 1986a; Breslow et al. 1990). Employees can be invited to participate in a lifestyle seminar where they learn about worksite opportunities to improve physical activity as part of adopting a healthier lifestyle (Blair et al. 1986a; Breslow et al. 1990).

*Educate the public about the importance of behavior change* through a “Heart Healthy” corner in the local newspaper (Brownson, Smith, and Pratt 1996).

### **Health Promotion Activities That Encourage Use of Places for Physical Activity**

*Build partnerships that promote opportunities for physical activity in a community.*

Community partners may select their own priorities (or mutual goals) from a list of possible program activities (Brownson, Smith, and Pratt 1996). Community leaders and residents can be enlisted to promote and champion opportunities for physical activity in order to increase program participation and attendance (Lewis et al. 1993; Brownson, Smith, and Pratt 1996).

*Use contests to provide incentives for regular physical activity.* Contests and other activities where everyone can succeed will bring physical activity opportunities to the attention of employees (Heirich et al. 1989). Walking contests among teams of employees make use of places for physical activity, such as walking trails (Heirich et al. 1989). Regular contests, which could be held monthly, can encourage participation in physical activity (King et al. 1988a).

*Use feedback to provide incentives for regular physical activity.* Opportunities for physical activity can be increased by offering short-term incentives for individuals and

groups (King et al. 1988a). For example, to enhance participation in a worksite exercise program, staff could post feedback in a public place about the progress of program participants (King et al. 1988a), highlight or publicize names of top performers (Linenger, Chesson, and Nice 1991) or provide social support and reinforcement to program participants as part of feedback regarding improvements in their fitness test scores (Linenger, Chesson, and Nice 1991). Programs can help participants monitor their physical activity levels by recording all exercise sessions done at work or at home (King et al. 1988a).

***Use financial incentives for regular physical activity.*** The cost of informational services and classes can be shared between employers and employees using co-pays, where employers pay most—perhaps two-thirds—of the costs (Heirich et al. 1989).

***Use individually adapted behavioral change programs.*** One-on-one counseling about physical activity can be provided (Heirich et al. 1989, 1993; Henritze, Brammell, and McGloin 1992). Counseling involves individualized encouragement to help people engage in physical activity on their own time (Heirich et al. 1989, 1993). A combination of counseling, social support and simple, accessible exercise activity can be offered to inactive employees (Heirich et al. 1993). Regular counseling may be conducted by health professionals and tailored to specific health risks and conditions of a person (Heirich et al. 1993).

## Summary

Persons and partnerships wishing to conduct community-based interventions to promote physical activity can select from numerous effective intervention options as identified in the *Community Guide* and described in this paper. State-of-the-art physical activity interventions typically include multiple components. Components from one type of intervention, such as social support interventions used in community settings, have been included as part of other intervention types, such as individual health behavior change interventions and interventions to encourage access

and use of places for physical activity. Interventions that have been shown to be effective will most likely need to be tailored to the unique needs and preferences of a community and integrated with the community's existing health promotion activities. This may require that an intervention described in the research literature be modified to some extent prior to use in another community setting. Due to scarce resources, it is prudent to model community-based physical activity promotion efforts on effective interventions, such as those identified in the *Community Guide*. However, it is equally critical to evaluate intervention effectiveness, and this becomes especially important the more an effective intervention is adapted to meet the needs and interests of a community.

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