



MAXIMIZING THE IMPACT OF SHARED USE AGREEMENTS:

A Guide for Policymakers and Fitness Professionals

Realizing the vision of a nation fully committed to health and wellness demands a new kind of collaboration among fitness professionals, health-care leaders, policymakers, employers and educators. The American Council on Exercise welcomes the opportunity to take a leadership role and advocate for incorporating more activity-based programs into our communities.

Government leaders at the local, state and federal level have the opportunity to play a more significant role in initiating, supporting and promoting activity-based programs and initiatives and to harness the expertise and leadership of fitness and other professionals living in the community.

The guidance presented here was developed by the American Council on Exercise to maximize safety, utility, preservation and enjoyment of community resources for all users by establishing best practices for the use of public space by fitness professionals and participants.

For the Policy Maker:

Livable communities with space for residents to engage in active, healthy lifestyles are considered a cornerstone of public health policy and a key to curbing the obesity epidemic. The conversation often focuses on the infrastructure and ensuring that there are adequate spaces for recreation and activity for residents of the community in the form of parks, schools and sports fields. As residents of communities seek out opportunities to engage in physical activity with others, increasing the number of opportunities available for physical activity and defining who is qualified to lead structured physical activity programs in the community has resulted in a greater focus on, and interest in, shared use agreements.

Conversations regarding shared use usually originate as a discussion around how to cultivate more physically active, dynamic community utilization of parks, school grounds and other public spaces. ACE believes that a proactive approach to managing for- and not-for-profit entities that offer structured physical activity and fitness programs in community parks, on school grounds and other public spaces serves the community by creating safe opportunities for residents to engage in healthy, active lifestyle behaviors, and ensuring access for all users. ACE recommends the following best practices to policymakers for consideration:

Community parks, school facilities and other public spaces should be available as a venue for structured, professional-led fitness activities organized by for- or not-for-profit entities subject to appropriate regulation including:

- Establish a permit requirement with a reasonable fee for use of the space
- Set a limit on the number of permits issued for a given space to ensure access to all users
- Establish reasonable revenue share/royalties consistent with other vendor programs if applicable
- Require professionals leading fitness instruction in parks, on school grounds and other public spaces to have a credible fitness certification that is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) and/or ANSI 17024 and proof of adequate liability insurance



For the Fitness Professional:

ACE has developed “Shared Use Guidelines” to promote responsible and courteous conduct when leading fitness activities on public lands. Keep in mind that, often, parks, school facilities and other open spaces are available for the use and enjoyment of the entire community. The fitness community must be good stewards of public lands and facilities and representatives of the profession as outlined in the ACE Shared Use Guidelines:

- **COMPLY WITH ALL LAWS AND REGULATIONS THAT APPLY TO USE OF THE SPACE:** Obtain and maintain all use permits and business licenses required by the municipality
- **PROFESSIONALISM:** Maintain a current NCCA and/or ANSI 17024 accredited fitness certification, professional liability insurance that meets the requirements of the space’s governing body and continuing education appropriate for the programs that are offered.
- **EDUCATE:** Provide education and leadership to your participants on best practices and etiquette for their interactions with other users of the space.
- **RESPECT NOISE ORDINANCES, POSTED HOURS AND HOLIDAY RESTRICTIONS:** Limit classes and boot camps to established hours and avoid the use of amplified music or equipment that generates excessive noise.
- **SAFETY:** Familiarize yourself with the locations of medical and public safety resources and develop an emergency response plan specific to the venue to create a safe exercise experience for your participants. Inspect the area where classes will be held prior to activity for hidden hazards and debris. Keep a cell phone and first aid kit accessible.
- **RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF OTHER USERS:** Avoid crowding high traffic areas of the space, including walkways and trails for programs, and maintain access to available resources and facilities for others.
- **MINIMIZE IMPACT ON INFRASTRUCTURE:** Avoid excessive wear and tear on the space, equipment and habitat. Landscaping, furniture, lighting and other fixtures should not be used as attachment points for equipment unless specifically designed for fitness activities. Instructor provided equipment should be limited to portable options.

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- **LEAVE NO TRACE:** Remove all garbage and debris from the area following every class.
- **OUTREACH:** Give back. Consider volunteering in outreach programs and events that are held at the site that support other users, facility maintenance and/or improvements.
- **COMMUNICATE:** Create and maintain an open line of communication with neighbors of the space and the municipality to provide feedback and answer questions regarding your programs.
- **ADVOCACY:** Take an active role in the political process that determines how parks, schools and other community resources are managed and utilized to promote active, healthy lifestyles.