

Recruit and Retain Girls in Your Program and Teams!



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While many more girls are engaged in athletics today than years ago, still far greater numbers of girls want to join and stay in sports, especially girls of color who face systemic barriers and limited access. We can design programs and teams where all girls feel connected, engaged, and included at far higher rates! Below are key tips drawn from a variety of resources and experts to successfully recruit and retain girls to youth sports programs and teams in schools, after-school programs, parks and recreation, and any youth sports organization.



1

Plan - Early and Often!

Action Step: Create opportunities to listen to girls in the community about their interests, suggestions, and previous experiences with sports. Host a focus group, lunchtime gathering or hold one-on-one conversations. Girls' feedback will let you know what will work and what can be improved. Build a sports program that fits the context and needs of girls in your community.

Action Step: Coordinate with necessary personnel about play space, uniforms, equipment, coach education and more. Should resources be limited, such as fewer coaches and limited supplies, consider creative ways to equally share and grow existing resources.

2

Advertise and Persist.

Action Step: Make plans well ahead of the season's start date to get the word out to girls about the opportunity to play, how to learn more, try-out, and join—at assemblies, lunch / recess, and community gatherings. Persist in recruitment pushes - keep it going throughout the year and year after year.

Action Step: Use social media, flyers, blog posts, text messages, etc. regularly to build, retain, and grow girls' teams and programs. Ensure girls and women are pictured in the advertising in ways that exemplify they are central and active. Translate messages into the languages that are spoken in the community.

3

**Utilize Influential, Inspiring
Students, Staff and Others.**

Action Step: Ask former women sports alums or pro women players in the community to speak at an assembly or event to help trumpet the fun of the team or program to spur excitement about sports play in ways that positively influence girls and community members around them.

Action Step: Invite a motivating player, team captain, or coach to share the benefits of participating on the team with students and youth. Ensure boys, men, and all are championing too and bringing allyship to activations.

4

**Train and Support Coaches
to Best Coach Girls.**

Action Step: Aim to maintain girls' teams that have coaches who are knowledgeable about the sport and create a team environment where players feel supported, engaged, valued, and that they belong. Offer and locate ongoing training regularly. ([Sign up with PCA and build a workshop content plan that works for your organization](#))

5

**Assess Sports Offered and
Girls' Experience, then
Adjust / Improve.**

Action Step: Host an informal focus group with players, coaches, and parents or send a basic online survey. Ask if the sports they want to play are being offered. Did they have fun when they played? Gain insights toward removing barriers to play and retention.

Action Step: Consider and address cultural barriers to play, such as girls getting messages from home or the community that they should not play - and actively work with your community to make girls feel part of and welcome in sports in ways that work for them, like highlighting women within the community playing sports!



6

Build Consistency.

Action Step: Work toward consistency among coaches and staff that know the program, students, and school / program well. Ask good coaches and staff to come back! Stay in touch. Invest in coaching development season after season. Studies show, girls having coaches that look like them helps them better connect to and feel included - recruit women of color to coach!

7

Make it Fun!

Action Step: Focus on your girls' enjoyment of the game. Praise effort instead of results and collaborate with them to set attainable goals. Build opportunities for girls to develop skills, connect with peers, and compete.



8

Ensure Equity.

Action Step: Look to give girls', boys', and mixed teams equitable opportunity to play. Girls' teams should have equally convenient practice and game schedules, [equitable facilities](#) in terms of quality and access, and equitable amenities such as team rooms, locker rooms, equipment, and more.

Action Step: Support PE / activity teachers, boys, and their coaches, and those in leadership on how to support girls' participation in sports by being allies. Research has shown that girls can feel discouraged from playing because of how they are treated by their PE teachers, recess monitors, and those supervising sports in school, after-school, and community programs. Allyship from all is key!

9

Celebrate Girls' and Women's Teams in the Community.

Action Step: Feature girls' teams in school announcements, on banners, the marquee, at assemblies, and in the community. This goes a long way to make girls interested and feel valued on their teams. Whatever support boys' teams get should also be afforded to all.

Action Step: Ensure boys, men, allies, and others are all making girls' sports experiences positive, supported, fair, and inclusive! Men can serve as supportive assistant coaches to women head coaches and attend girls' sports events.

10

Make Girls' and Women's Sports a Community Priority.

Action Step: Host a Girls and Women in Sports Day assembly, Title IX celebration, WNBA event, National Women's Soccer League watch party, or similar gathering for local high school, college or pro women's teams.

Action Step: Directly highlight girls that play and women alums that play(ed) in college or pro levels. Doing so can help girls get excited about girls and women's sports endeavors, builds pride, and further inspires girls to join and stay on teams.

