

Open Community Use of School Recreational Areas

Summary: The South Carolina Alliance of YMCAs (Alliance) is committed to its mission of promoting youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. In communities throughout South Carolina, the organization focuses on improving the health and wellbeing of children and families. To that end, the Alliance has received a grant to help combat the state's obesity epidemic.

An estimated 25 percent of children in South Carolina are obese and increasing numbers of these children are being treated for obesity-related conditions such as Type 2 diabetes and hypertension (South Carolina Institute for Childhood Obesity and Related Disorders). Children who are overweight are more likely to become overweight adults facing obesity-related chronic complications such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes (South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control). With a population of adults in which almost 66 percent are obese or overweight, South Carolina has the 14th worst obesity rate in the nation (South Carolina Department of Health and Human Resources).

The Alliance encourages school districts to allow the community use of recreational areas in order to combat these negative statistics. Public schools have a variety of recreational areas such as playgrounds, fields, courts and tracks where people can engage in physical activity. In some communities, schools are often the only place to find safe and affordable recreation spaces. After hours when the areas are not in use, schools can continue to provide students and the local community with the opportunity to maintain active and healthy lifestyles.

Local district action required: If districts want to allow community use of recreational areas, SCSBA recommends adopting the model policy.

Policy reference: KFA (Open Community Use of School Recreational Areas)

Model policy follows.

OPEN COMMUNITY USE OF SCHOOL RECREATIONAL AREAS

Code **KFA** Issued **MODEL/14**

Purpose: To establish the basic structure for open community use of school recreational areas.

The board believes one strategy to address issues of physical inactivity and obesity in the state is allowing the community the use of outside recreation spaces. In communities where parks and land space are limited, outside recreation areas on school property can offer opportunities for physical activity and recreation for children and families. Schools can offer a variety of safe, clean facilities including running tracks, playgrounds and outdoor courts and fields.

As a service to the community, the board will open up outdoor areas to the community as follows.

- The board will provide public school recreational areas through the use of taxpayers' funds collected for educational purposes.
- The community will be entitled to access the recreational areas during daylight hours when the school or school-related organizations are not using such areas.

The board defines open recreational areas to mean the designated tracks, playgrounds, courts and fields. *[Option: The following specific areas are identified as recreational areas open to the community (list areas here).]*

Use of recreational areas by the schools and by school-related organizations takes precedence over all other uses.

All use of school property will be in accordance with federal, state and local laws. All applicable district rules, regulations and policies will be enforced while community members are utilizing the recreational areas.

The district is not liable for any personal injury resulting from the use of the open recreational areas. Furthermore, as the district is not responsible for the security or supervision of any public property permitted to be used as open areas for recreational purposes, the district is not liable for any property damage or loss incurred while using the recreational areas.

Cf. KF

Adopted ^

Legal references:

- A. S.C. Code of Laws 1976, as amended:
 1. Section 59-78-10, *et seq.* - South Carolina Tort Claims Act.