

**Appendix H.**  
**ENHANCING GENDER EQUITY AND HEALTH BENEFITS**  
**BY EXPANDING PHYSICAL EDUCATION FACILITIES**

This report outlines the progress made in sports participation by girls and women since gender equity was mandated for federally funded education programming, the need to encourage participation outside campus programs and the health, sociological and psychological benefits derived from participation in sports.

**Progress by Federal Mandate**

Traditionally relegated to cheerleading and to sports conducive to the “fair sex,” girls and women have made huge strides in their participation in all competitive sports, including team sports, such as basketball and soccer, which in the past have been played almost exclusively by boys and men.

The strides are in large part due to Title IX of the Education Amendments approved by Congress in 1972. Title IX gave girls and women equal opportunities in all education programs receiving tax dollars, including sports.

Since Title IX went into effect, women and girls have made startling progress when it comes to participation in scholastic sports, according to “Title IX at 30,” a report card on gender equity released in 2002 by the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education.

In 1971, fewer than 295,000 girls participated in varsity athletics at the high school level, accounting for just 7 percent of all varsity athletes. At the college level, fewer than 30,000 women competed in intercollegiate athletics.

“Low participation rates reflected the lack of institutional commitment to providing athletics programming for women,” the 2002 report stated. “Before Title IX, female college athletes received only 2 percent of overall athletic budgets, and athletic scholarships for women were virtually nonexistent.”

By 2001, the participation of women and girls in athletics had grown significantly at both the high school and college levels. Nearly 2.8 million girls participated in varsity athletics in high school, an increase of more than 847 percent in 30 years, according to the report. In fact, girls comprised 41.5 percent of varsity athletes nationwide. At the college level, 150,916 women participated in intercollegiate sports, accounting for 43 percent of college athletes competing at the varsity level, a hike of more than 403 percent since 1971.

Despite the strides made since Title IX went into effect, there is still much room for improvement, as colleges and universities continue to spend most of their share of athletics money on men’s programming.

While the number of girls and women participating in sports has skyrocketed under Title IX, the resources and benefits allocated to female athletes fall far short of what equity requires, despite significant gains, the report found. For every tax dollar that funds athletics at the Division I and II levels, female sports receive 35 cents, compared to 65 cents for male sports, the report found.

“After 30 years, the gap is still significant and closing much too slowly,” the report stated. “Institutions are not exercising restraint on men’s sports expenditures while women’s sports catch up.”

Among the reports key findings are the following:

- Between 1997 and 2001, for every dollar going into athletics at the Division I and II levels, male sports received 58 cents, compared to 42 cents for female sports.
- Each year, male athletes receive \$133 million in college athletic scholarships at NCAA member institutions, or 36 percent more than female athletes.
- Division I colleges spent an average of \$2,983 per female athlete, compared to \$3,786 for male athletes.

There are no spending data for girls’ and boys’ interscholastic sports, but anecdotal evidence suggests similar discrepancies occur at the elementary and secondary school levels, according to the report.

While court rulings in a number of lawsuits filed since 1990 have upheld the right to equal athletic opportunities regardless of sex, enforcement of Title IX has been wanting, the report found.

### **Expanding Recreational Opportunities**

While Title IX is under attack by critics who charge it discriminates against male athletes, congressional and recreation leaders across the country are fighting to maintain the guarantees of gender equity and expanding them beyond the high school and college campuses.

In 2002, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) approved a policy statement, “Gender Equity in Recreation and Sports,” to “promote the full implementation of and compliance with Title IX among park and recreation agencies, including agencies that partner with schools and other educational institutions,” according to a statement released by the NRPA.

The NRPA “encourages park and recreation agencies to ensure that facilities are developed and programs are implemented so they meet male and female recreation needs,” according to the statement.

In the City of Los Angeles, the Department of Recreation and Park's "Raise the Bar" Program states the following goals:

- Involve more girls in sports and recreation programs in the City by undertaking measures to encourage their participation and by providing opportunities for participation.
- Improve the representation of girls and women in sports programs where they are not adequately represented.
- Ensure the Department is Equitable in its Distribution of resources for all youth sports.

These goals are increasingly important because many girls are discovering sports and its benefits not in school-sponsored play, but in independent youth leagues, which are often competing with male leagues for use of public recreational facilities.

"Outside the jurisdiction of Title IX, competition for young girls has proliferated in the past quarter-century with a governance comprised not of federal bureaucrats but of moms and dads who shuttle pigtailed players to and from practice in minivans," Jessica Gavora wrote in her book, "Tilting the Playing Field: Schools, Sports, Sex, and Title IX."

Getting girls to participate in sports early and keep them interested is a key, according to the Women's Sports Foundation. Studies have indicated that boys and girls between the ages of 6 and 9 and their parents are equally interested in sports participation, but by age 14, girls drop out of sports at a significantly higher rate, according to the foundation.

While Title IX applies to education programming receiving federal dollars, the law would likely not apply to allegations of gender discrimination by a local park and recreation agency, according to an article published in the periodical "Parks and Recreation."

As a result, setting goals such as those set by the City of Los Angeles can be an important step toward guaranteeing equity in sports programs not tied to federally funded educational programming.

### **Health Benefits**

Numerous studies have concluded that girls and women who participate in sports reap psychological, physiological and sociological benefits regardless of age.

Girls who play sports are healthier, both emotionally and physically, and are less likely to use drugs, smoke and drink, than non-participants, according to research studies commissioned by the Women's Sports Foundation in 1998. Other studies have shown that athletic girls have fewer problems with teen pregnancy and have higher self esteem and higher grades.

Among the key findings are the following:

- Teenage female athletes are less than half as likely to get pregnant as female non-athletes (5 percent, compared to 11 percent of non-athletes). They are also more likely to report they had never had sexual intercourse later in adolescence, according to a 1998 report by the Women's Sports Foundation.
- Women who are active in sports and recreational activities as girls feel greater confidence, self esteem and pride, both physically and socially, than those who were sedentary, according to a 1995 report by the Melpomene Institute, which helps girls and women of all ages in physical activity and health.
- Exercise and participating in sports can enhance the physical and mental health of adolescent girls by improving self esteem and increasing self-confidence, according to a 1997 report by the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.
- Girls who participate in sports are more likely to achieve academic success and graduate from high school than those who do not participate, according to the 1989 Wilson Report. Graduation rates are also higher for women who participate in Division I NCAA Sports, according to a 2001 report.

Participation in sports also has health benefits for women later in life, with studies linking sports participation to reduced incidents of breast cancer and osteoporosis, among other health problems.

“Exercise is especially beneficial for women because it helps prevent the loss of fat-free mass (FFM), strength, bone mineral density, and functional ability that usually occur with aging, while helping to maintain lower fat mass and reduce obesity,” according to a report in the “Journal of the American Dietetic Association.”

A study that appeared in the “Journal of the National Cancer Institute” found that one to three hours of exercise a week over a woman's reproductive lifetime (teens to about age 40) can result in a 20 to 30 percent reduction in the risk of breast cancer, while four or more hours may reduce the risk by almost 60 percent.

Another recent study, conducted by researchers from Vanderbilt University, indicates that lifelong exercise can reduce the risks of endometrial cancer, a fairly common cancer among North American women.

### **Sociological Benefits**

The benefits of sports participation for girls and women extend beyond health into the workplace, where the business organizational model is often learned on the playing field, according to studies.

“Sport is one of the most important socio-cultural learning environments in our society and, until quite recently, has been reserved for boys and men,” Dr. Donna Lopiano wrote in a paper on gender equity published by the Women’s Sports Foundation.

Leadership ability may also be enhanced by participating in sports. A recent study published in the periodical “Adolescence” that linked athletic participation among high school students to leadership ability found that female athletes slightly outscored male athletes on leadership ability.

The study “adds further evidence to the theory that the types of personal and social behavior associated with athletic training and participation may indeed increase, or at least strengthen, high school students’ leadership potential.

“In particular, there is the possibility that athletics offers young women, as well as young men, the chance to improve leadership ability, speeding progress toward the achievement of societal equality,” the study concluded.

### **Conclusion**

Expanding the participation of girls and women in sports by providing physical education facilities and programs that insure gender equity should be a key goal of any community.

The benefits – aside from better health – are clear: higher academic achievement, enhanced self esteem and improved leadership abilities, qualities that help women succeed in the workplace and level the playing field in everyday life.