

Possible Solutions for Solving Shared Use Struggles



Active Kids,
Healthy
Community

Despite the existence of shared use agreements for public school facilities in the District, right now, **only 35% of schools in neighborhoods with the highest rates of obesity** (Wards 4, 5, 7 & 8) **open their recreational facilities to community groups.** Compare that to 63% of schools in the healthier parts of the city (Wards 1, 2, 3 & 6).

In a survey of D.C. community groups, many barriers were reported to frequent and robust use of recreational facilities in neighborhoods. **The biggest obstacle for them to use the public schools is difficulty navigating the administrative system** – figuring out where to start, who to talk to, how to fill out the paperwork, and the wait time for approval.

Metroball Youth Outreach, a basketball club that strives to make youth more productive and enhance their lives, has tried to work with several schools to utilize their facilities but have faced *red tape* and *uncooperative administration* and *high costs*, forcing them to cut back the program and bringing them to the point where they are considering moving out of the District's priority communities to Virginia.



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“Not having a consistent facility hinders what we’re trying to do,” Jones said. “I think there should be an easier process to use facilities for nonprofits and programs that are there to help youth.”

Based on responses from over 30 community groups using, or attempting to use, shared use agreements, the following may be next steps for D.C. leaders to explore –

1. IMPROVE THE EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY of the process for seeking approval for shared used by: Identifying an agency that oversees the agreements; Improving transparency; and Centralizing applications and approvals.

2. CREATE A CENTRAL CLEARINGHOUSE where schools could search for programming they would like to bring to their community, and groups could see what locations and times are available.

3. ESTABLISH A SHARED USE FUND that would: Assist both schools and community groups in high-risk neighborhoods to cover maintenance and security costs, and extend liability coverage to non-profit community groups lacking the funds for insurance.

4. DELIVER ASSISTANCE to local schools and to community groups through a shared use toolkit and publicly accessible website.

5. CONVENE A TASK FORCE of representatives of the community, principals from public schools; local government agencies; recreational organizations; and public health professionals.

6. CREATE A SYSTEM TO MONITOR the effectiveness and cost of improved shared use policies and the impact on the community.