

Engaging Girls and Young Women from Diverse Ethno-Cultural Communities

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROVIDERS

Canadian communities are becoming increasingly diverse, creating new challenges and opportunities for community sport and physical activity providers. To increase the availability and utilization of quality sport and physical activity programs for girls and young women from diverse ethno-cultural communities, CAAWS led the *Making Healthy Connections with Racialized Communities* project. The recommendations below are based on findings from the project, and are intended to support service providers in taking action to engage this important target group.

1 GET EDUCATED ABOUT CULTURAL AND RACIALIZED DIFFERENCES

- **BE SPECIFIC** – Take time to learn about the religious, cultural and ethnic groups in your community. Be careful not to make assumptions or rely on stereotypes – racialized communities are diverse and complex.
- **PROVIDE TRAINING** – Provide mandatory anti-racist and cultural sensitivity training for all staff and volunteers.
- **BE A CHAMPION** – Become a champion for actively engaging diverse groups in your organization and community.

Girls and women from diverse ethno-cultural communities are the most underrepresented in Canada's sport and physical activity system. (Sport Canada, 2005)

2 CREATE TARGETED PROGRAMS

- **ASK THE GIRLS** – Consult with target girls and young women on program design and delivery, including program scheduling (day of the week, time of day), length, location, activities, level of competition, leaders, etc.
- **VARIETY IS THE SPICE OF LIFE** – With cultural and religious concerns in mind, create opportunities for girls and young women to try something new.
- **HEALTHY CHOICES** – To positively influence the health of girls and young women, quality programs must provide moderate/vigorous physical activities, and incorporate healthy food choices.

3 DIVERSIFY LEADERSHIP

Leaders from within the target community will increase the credibility of the program and host organization, and the comfort level of parents and participants.

- **RECRUIT** – Proactively recruit diverse staff and volunteers from the communities you serve.
- **HIRE DIVERSE FEMALE LEADERS** – Programs targeting girls and women may benefit from female leaders from the same religious, cultural or ethnic community. However, most importantly, the leader should be a caring female adult and positive role model.

Many community-based sport and physical activity programs are not gender appropriate, and fail to address parental and cultural concerns with respect to girls' and young women's participation. More girl-focused programs are needed. (OCASI, 2006)

- **SUPPORT SUCCESS** – Build capacity and support future success by providing training for young staff and establishing youth leadership initiatives – social and systemic barriers may have limited diverse youth’s opportunities for leadership and professional skill development.

4 ADDRESS THE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS

- **MAKE IT A PRIORITY** – Review and consider updating your organization’s mandate and/or policies to reflect the growing diversity of your community. Develop and implement policies that support the provision of quality programs and services for diverse ethno-cultural communities. Evaluate programs and services to identify gaps and barriers, and opportunities for enhancement.
- **BUILD PARTNERSHIPS** – Build new partnerships and collaborate with various organizations serving diverse ethno-cultural communities.
- **COLOURBLINDNESS DOES NOT EQUAL EQUITY** – Individuals and organizations committed to increasing gender equity and the engagement diverse ethno-cultural communities should recognize and celebrate difference, building programs and services based on the needs, interests, strengths and experiences of the target groups.

Take Action Today!

DOWNLOAD THE REPORT

Findings from focus groups with girls and young women from diverse ethno-cultural communities, and program leaders; includes stats and facts, and background information on the concepts of race, racism and racialization. Hardcopies available by request.

HOST A WORKSHOP

Learn more about the project and findings, explore the complexities of race and multiculturalism, and gather further tips and recommendations to increase the participation of diverse girls and young women in your community.

GET “ON THE MOVE”

CAAWS’ national *On the Move* initiative provides practical information about creating quality sport and physical activity experiences for inactive girls and young women (ages 9–18).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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