

ChangeLabSolutions

Safe Routes to School: The Key Role of Districts and Principals

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ChangeLab Solutions

Who are we?

- National nonprofit that works with communities, policy makers & advocates
- Lawyers, planners, policy experts
- Create policy solutions/overcome legal barriers to support healthy communities

DISCLAIMER

The information provided in this discussion is for informational purposes only, and does not constitute legal advice. ChangeLab Solutions does not enter into attorney-client relationships.

ChangeLab Solutions is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that educates and informs the public through objective, non-partisan analysis, study, and/or research. The primary purpose of this discussion is to address legal and/or policy options to improve public health. There is no intent to reflect a view on specific legislation.

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Supporting Safe Routes to School: Programs and Policies

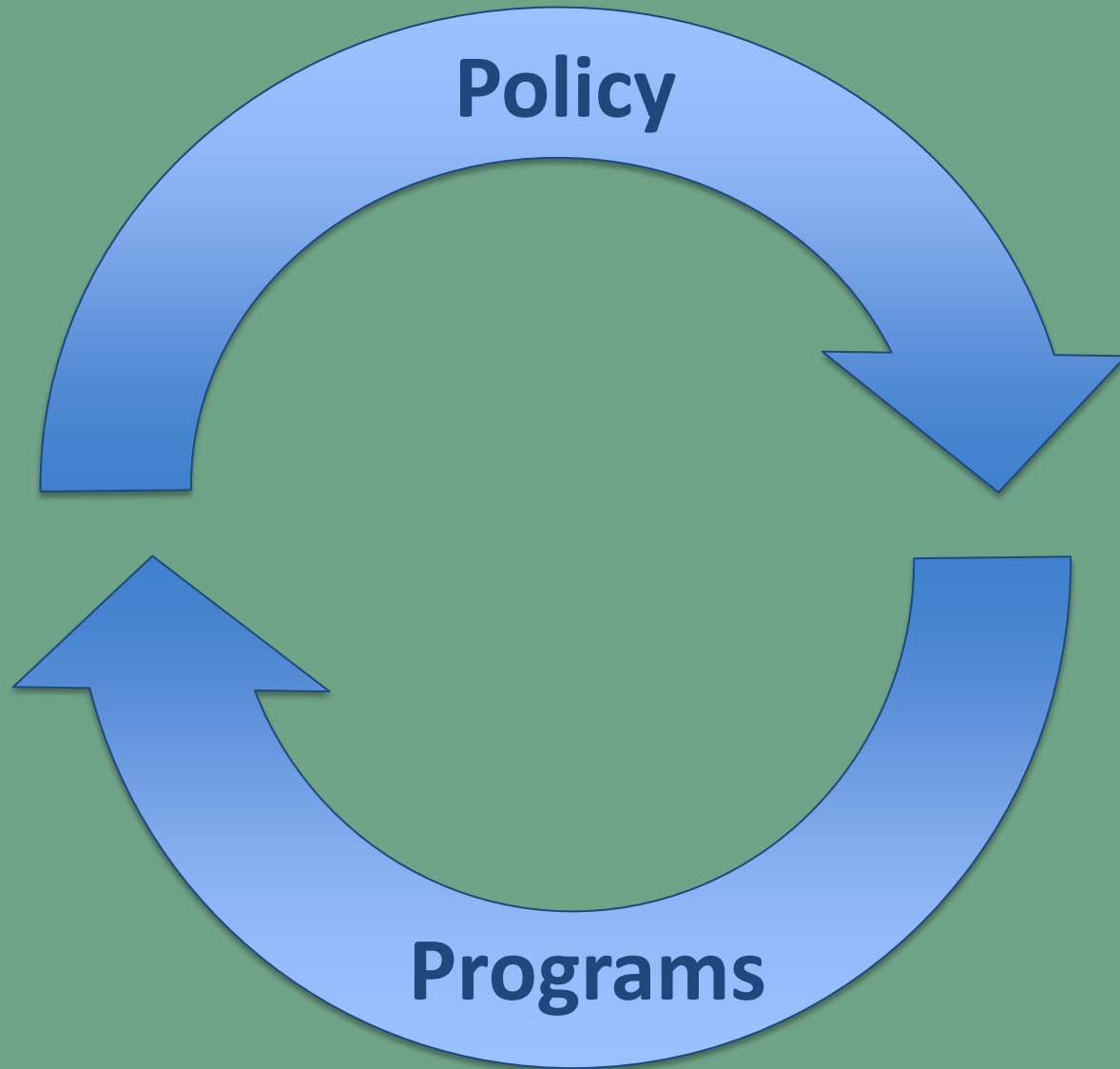


Achieving goals



Healthy, happy,
learning kids

Policy and Programs



Approaches



Supportive policies

A close-up photograph of the side of a yellow school bus. The word "SCHOOL" is written in large, bold, black letters on a yellow background. Several red emergency lights are visible along the top edge of the bus. In the background, a brick building with windows is visible.

District: Policy declaring district supports walking and biking

School:

Include support for walking and biking in student/parent handbooks, newsletters, announcements, etc.

Fairfax County



Include Support in District Wellness Policies

- **Required by federal law**
- **New regulations coming out in the next year**
- **Good opportunity to incorporate language about kids walking and biking**

District Task Forces & School Teams



School Team

- Includes: school & district administrators, town officials, parents, advocates, etc.
- Goal: efficiently coordinate efforts to increase levels and safety of walking and biking

Example: Roosevelt Middle School, Eugene, Oregon



- Started with school team
- Now district wide



Walking School Buses & Bike Trains



- Policy can support walking school buses
- Spelling out roles improves programs
- Minimizes liability issues

Arrival/Dismissal Policies & Student Travel Plans

Student travel plans can reduce dangers



Types of measures:

- Separating kids walking and biking from cars and buses
- Staggered pick up and drop off
- No idling policies



Cincinnati District Wide Travel Plan



Improving safety, reducing congestion, increasing physical activity

School Siting

An aerial photograph of a school building and its surrounding neighborhood. The school is a large, multi-story brick building with a flat roof and a prominent brick chimney. It is surrounded by a mix of residential houses, some with large lawns and trees. The overall scene is a typical suburban or urban residential area.

Adopt Smart School Siting, Closure and Consolidation Policies

- School locations are important & long term
- Decisions are often ad hoc
- Good policies can provide a process and balance interests



School Siting factsheet & model policies

Locating schools within communities can make healthier students by making it easier for students to walk and bike to school, and to use school playgrounds and facilities outside of school hours.

Smart School Siting How School Locations Can Make Students Healthier and Communities Stronger

Forty years ago, nearly half of all students walked or biked to school.¹ Now, only 13 percent do.² Why this change?

The biggest reason is because today's schools are located too far from children's homes for walking or biking to be practical.³ In recent decades, due to a variety of pressures, schools have increasingly been built on the outskirts of communities.⁴ As a result, two-thirds of schools are now located far from where children live.⁵ Meanwhile, obesity rates for children and adolescents have more than tripled,⁶ and nearly a third of children are overweight or obese.⁷

But locating schools *within* communities can mean healthier students by making it easier for students to walk and bike to school, and to use school playgrounds and facilities outside of school hours. Districts can promote healthy school siting by locating schools near where students live, whether by retaining centrally located schools or by building new schools within communities instead of on their outskirts.

Other key areas for policy





- Traffic safety education
- Bike rodeos and promotional events
- Data collection
- Joint use policies and agreements
- Crossing guard/student safety patrols

Coming (Relatively) Soon!

Safe Routes to School District Policy Workbook: Do It Yourself Policy Making



ChangeLab Solutions
Law & policy innovation for the common good.



Our Resources



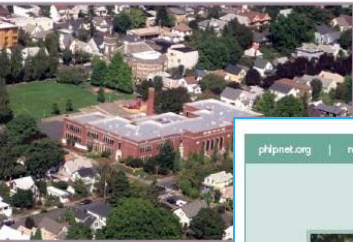
Opening School Grounds to the Community After Hours

A toolkit for increasing physical activity through joint use agreements



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Smart School Siting How School Locations Can Healthier and Communities

Forty years ago, nearly half of all students walked. Now, only 13 percent do. Why this change? The biggest reason is because today's schools are on the outskirts of communities. As a result, two-thirds of children live farther from school than their parents did. Meanwhile, obese adolescents have more than tripled, and nearly 10 percent are obese.




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NATIONAL POLICY & LEGAL ALLIANCE
TO PREVENT CHILDHOOD OBESITY

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Safe Routes to School: Minimizing Your Liability Risk

Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs can help reduce schools' risk of liability while making it safer for students to walk or bike. This fact sheet explains why liability fears shouldn't keep schools from supporting SRTS programs, and offers practical tips for schools and community advocates.


Some schools have been reluctant to support Safe Routes to School (SRTS) programs due to concerns about being sued if an injury or problem arises. But such fears are largely unwarranted. By acting responsibly and understanding the liability issues in question, schools, nonprofits, and parent groups can help students reap the health and academic benefits of SRTS programs while minimizing the risk of a lawsuit. In fact, well-run SRTS programs can even reduce schools' risk of liability by identifying potential dangers and putting measures in place to protect children against injury.

Because nonprofits, parent groups, and schools may all be involved in SRTS programs, it can be important for each of these groups to understand SRTS and liability. This fact sheet explains why liability fears shouldn't stop school districts from supporting SRTS programs, provides an overview of liability and negligence, and offers practical tips on how school districts and others can reduce their risk of liability.


Because liability issues vary from state to state, consulting with a local lawyer may be helpful in understanding your specific issues, as well as in structuring SRTS programs to minimize liability concerns.



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