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FIRST CROSS-SECTOR YOUTH SPORTS PLAN RELEASED TO HELP SERVE THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN, COMMUNITIES

Aspen Institute Project Play initiative identifies eight breakthrough strategies

Washington, DC, January 26, 2015— Over the past two years, the Aspen Institute has convened more than 250 thought leaders in 10 roundtables and other events around the nation, identifying strategies that can address barriers limiting access to early sport activity that fosters the development of healthy children and communities. A range of barriers were explored, including rising costs of organized youth sports, the loss of casual play, and the concussion crisis.

Today, through its Project Play initiative, the Institute releases a 50-page report aggregating the eight most promising strategies, based on research and the insights of experts. Authored by the Sports & Society Program with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game* is a unifying document, collecting in one place the best opportunities for stakeholders—from sport leaders to mayors, parents to policymakers—to work together to grow access to an early, positive sport experience.

To read and download the report, visit: YouthReport.ProjectPlay.us.

“Sport participation has been a tool of public health for more than a century,” said Tom Farrey, executive director of the Sports & Society Program and veteran journalist. “But we’re morphing into a nation of sport haves and sport have-nots, with children from low-income families and other vulnerable populations facing the greatest barriers to participation. The report creates a platform that stakeholders from across sectors can use to get all children active through sports.”

Defining the Problem

The report focuses on children between the ages of 6 and 12, who, despite the growth of sport as an entertainment industry, participate less often than kids did just a few years ago. Only 40 percent of children played team sports on a regular basis in 2013, down from 44.5 percent in 2008, according to data culled for Project Play by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA), which commissions an annual survey on participation in U.S. households.

Participation among pre-adolescents is down not just in football (from 1.8 million to 1.3 million children), where parents have become concerned about brain injuries, but in many sports, including softball, baseball, track & field, soccer and basketball. The amount of physical activity

acquired through sport is also down. In 2013, the most recent year of data collected by SFIA, less than one in three children engaged in high-calorie sport or fitness activity three times a week.

Finding Solutions

The eight strategies recognized as most promising in the report are:

- 1) Ask kids what they want
- 2) Reintroduce free play
- 3) Encourage sport sampling
- 4) Revitalize in-town leagues
- 5) Think small (to create more play spaces)
- 6) Design for development
- 7) Train all coaches
- 8) Emphasize prevention (to limit injuries)

The report offers 40+ ideas on how the strategies could be supported by the eight key sectors that touch the lives of children: Community recreation groups, national sports organizations, policymakers & civic leaders, education, parents, public health, business & industry, and tech & media. It also addresses the need for national and community leadership in facilitating cross-sector collaboration around sport and physical activity.

The report will be introduced today at the Clinton Foundation's Health Matters Activation Summit. Then, on February 25 at the Newseum in Washington DC, the Aspen Institute will host the 2015 Project Play Summit, convening 300 sport, health, business, philanthropic and other leaders to explore and inspire meaningful efforts around the report. An agenda, list of featured speakers, and registration link can be found on the Project Play website: www.ProjectPlay.us.

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The Aspen Institute Sports & Society Program convenes leaders, facilitates dialogue and inspires solutions that help sport serve the public interest. The program provides a venue for thought leadership where knowledge can be deepened and breakthrough strategies explored on a range of issues. More information at: www.SportsAndSociety.org.

The Aspen Institute's Project Play, an initiative of the Sports & Society Program, is a multi-stage effort to provide the thought leadership to build "Sport for All, Play for Life" communities that foster a culture of health. Project partners include the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, American College of Sports Medicine, Nike, the Clinton Health Matters Initiative, the University of Florida's Sport Policy & Research Collaborative, and the President's Council on Fitness, Sports & Nutrition. For more information, visit www.ProjectPlay.us.

The Aspen Institute is an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC. Its mission is to foster leadership based on enduring values and to provide a nonpartisan venue for dealing with critical issues. More information at: www.aspeninstitute.org