

Reimagining the Youth Sport System Across the United States:

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A Commentary From the 2020–2021 President's
Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board

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When young athletes are faced with challenges in learning a new skill, executing a game plan, or overcoming barriers such as lack of equipment or space, youth, and the adults who support them, find ways to adjust. Hoops are lowered for beginning basketball players, starting lines or boundaries are drawn in the dirt, soccer “goalposts” are created from whatever is handy, and so on. These are important adaptations and examples of human ingenuity. They are also acknowledgments that youth have different developmental needs than adults.

In recent decades, the youth sport model has become more professionalized, with these adaptations arguably less directed toward ensuring broad access and development and more focused on competitive prospects and outcomes. In other words, the needs of the developing child and society are often secondary to the cultivation of highly talented performers, celebration of competitive success and maintenance of an ever-growing business model (Gregory, 2017). Researchers and practitioners have called for changes to the youth sport system (e.g., long-term athlete development), yet adoption of these recommendations has been slow, and the challenge of ensuring young people’s holistic well-being persists (Gould, 2019). This prevents youth sport from achieving its full potential as a context for inclusion and belonging, connection to the community, positive development and promotion of lifelong participation in physical activity.

There is a pressing need for evidence-based, innovative, coordinated action across all persons and contexts that influence the development, health, and well-being of young people. This includes the youth sport system, defined by Dorsch et al. (2020) as “the set of interdependent persons (i.e., parents, siblings, peers, and coaches) and contexts (i.e., organizations, communities, and societies) that have the potential to influence or be influenced by an athlete’s behaviors, attitudes, experiences, and outcomes in youth sport” (p. 2). The purpose of this commentary is to propose changes across levels of the youth sport system that can most effectively cultivate the development, health, and well-being of youth across the United States. This reimagining of the youth sport system includes a set of actionable takeaways that should be applied expeditiously in this developmental context. These ideas are presented with an eye toward (re)establishing youth as the central focus, beneficiary, and authority within the integrated youth sport system, which is essential for meeting young people’s physical, mental, emotional, and social needs.

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The Benefits and Detriments of Youth Sport

There is a deeply held belief in the United States that sport is a meaningful developmental context; as such, sport participation is considered an important rite of passage for American youth. Sport is assumed to build character and teach leadership, teamwork, and resilience, skills that prepare youth for adulthood (Coakley, 2015). Yet, young people’s sport experiences are not uniform, and sport is known to produce a range of outcomes that are not always optimal or desirable (Cardinal et al., 2013; Chalip, 2015; Massey & Whitley, 2016; Weiss et al., 2008). Potential benefits of youth sport are well established, falling into five categories: (a) economic and community impact; (b) educational and career success; (c) lifelong physical activity participation; (d) mental, emotional and social health; and (e) physical health (President’s Council on Sports & Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, 2020a).

The potential for youth sport to produce these benefits is counterbalanced by the potential for youth sport to be maladaptive. In some settings, youth sport participation has been tied to increased likelihood of injury, stress, anxiety, burnout, disordered eating, and substance abuse (Bean et al., 2014; Thompson & Sherman, 2014; Vella, 2019), with marginalized populations often experiencing additional negative outcomes (Massey & Whitley, 2021). Sport can also normalize violence and aggression, enable maltreatment and abuse, reinforce social inequities, and foster negative peer relationships (Adams, 2020; Kerr et al., 2019; Krane et al., 2014; Massey & Whitley, 2016; Waldron et al., 2011). Further harms can occur if youth sport prioritizes winning and financial gain over more holistic personal growth, leading to exclusion, stunted development, identity restriction or foreclosure, burnout, and dropout (Massey & Whitley, 2021).

The extent to which sport participation produces benefits over detriments depends on how a range of factors, from intrapersonal to organizational, shape its design and delivery (Bowers & Ozyurtcu, 2018; Dorsch et al., 2020; Gould, 2019; Whitley et al., 2018). Successful evidence-based practices that maximize youth sport benefits include (a) a safe, caring, and stable climate with trusting and respectful relationships with adults and peers (e.g., Bergholz et al., 2016; Fry & Gano-Overway, 2010; Holt et al., 2017; Vella, 2019; Whitley et al., 2018, 2019) and (b) ongoing training for coaches, parents, mentors, and other adults supporting youth (e.g., Bergholz et al., 2016; Dorsch et al., 2017; Holt et al., 2017; Lawrason et al., 2019; Smoll & Smith, 2002; Thrower et al., 2016; Whitley et al., 2019). Moreover, when young athletes are considered the central authority within their sport experience (e.g., afforded leadership and voice) and there is support for their autonomy and competence, they are more likely to thrive than when central authority resides in adults (Bergholz et al., 2016; Ward & Parker, 2013; Whitley et al., 2018).

Despite the success of extant evidence-based practices in some youth sport settings, they are not widely or systematically used in the United States. Many youth sport programs emphasize athletic skill and performance-related outcomes over broader developmental benefits. These pathways need not be mutually exclusive, yet two distinct models of youth sport exist in the United States: sport for development and sport for competition (United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee, 2014). In addition to — or perhaps *because* of — the opposing philosophies that guide these models, disparities in sport participation among girls, racial and ethnic minorities, youth living in rural areas, youth with nonconforming gender identities, and youth with disabilities have persisted or widened over the last decade (Aspen Institute Project Play, 2020b; Kann et al., 2018; National Physical Activity Plan Alliance, 2018; Ross et al.,



2020; Zarrett et al., 2018). Participation disparities are compounded by broader social and economic inequities. For example, youth whose families earn over \$100,000 per year begin playing sports, on average, nearly 2 years earlier than youth from families making less than \$35,000 (Aspen Institute Project Play, 2015). This is a reminder that youth sport in the United States is embedded within broader systems.

The decentralized approach to youth sport in the United States reinforces these gaps, with federal governance and policy historically eschewed in accord with ideological preferences for local, market-driven control (Bowers et al., 2010). Various public and private stakeholder groups have produced disjointed and inconsistent efforts to generate beneficial youth sport experiences and outcomes (Bowers et al., 2011). Given this history, two recent efforts to galvanize a more organized and centralized youth sport system in the United States are noteworthy: the *Sport for All Playbook* by the Aspen Institute Project Play (2015) and the *National Youth Sports Strategy* (NYSS) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS, 2019). These efforts provide critical guidance that can optimize the developmental benefits of youth sport. For example, the *Sport for All Playbook* presents the most promising strategies for stakeholders (e.g., sport leaders, parents, policymakers) to create universal access to early, positive sport experiences. The NYSS identifies over 50 opportunities and action items in the Framework for Understanding Youth Sports Participation. The Framework is designed to promote equity and inclusion in accord with the NYSS vision “that one day, all youth will have the opportunity, motivation,

and access to play sports, regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, ability, or ZIP code” (DHHS, 2019, p. 3).

With both of these strategic guides in place by late 2019, the youth sport system in the United States was poised to begin taking evidence-based, coordinated action to place the needs of youth at the center of the sport experience. However, the COVID-19 pandemic required dramatic shifts in the administration of youth sport, drawing attention away from the emerging national efforts to adopt a consistent and developmental approach to youth sport.

Youth Sport During the Pandemic

In many ways, the pandemic and other events that began in 2020 (e.g., lockdowns, social isolation, economic downturn, racial justice unrest, political division) exacerbated existing inequities and suboptimal practices in youth sport, particularly among minority, marginalized and other vulnerable populations (Dorsch et al., in press; Kelly et al., 2020). When the onset of the pandemic led to regional, state and local shutdowns, many young people were unable to participate in any sports, organized or informal, with friends and teammates. Among those who maintained some level of participation, cost-, access-, and time-related barriers shifted the balance of opportunities and engagement compared to before the pandemic (Dorsch et al., in press). Additionally, the lack of a unified plan among communities, schools, and sport organizations for the safe resumption of youth sport exacerbated inequities in access. Data collected in summer 2020 by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association show that club-based sports

returned much faster than community- and school-based sports. Youth from less affluent and marginalized communities were less likely to access these “pay-to-play” opportunities. Safety concerns also arose as club-based sports adopted some of the same pandemic-driven practices as professional sports leagues, yet functioned largely without the same infrastructure (e.g., frequent testing and performance “bubbles”) in place for safe training and competition.

This trend toward club-based settings poses a longer-term risk in undercutting the viability of more accessible local programming offered through parks and recreation departments, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, Police Athletic Leagues, school-based sports, and community-based organizations. This is especially concerning for those families that had to prioritize cost recovery (e.g., rent/mortgage repayments) over “pay-to-play” sport opportunities for their children (Kelly et al., 2020). A similar differential emerged in interscholastic sport: Private and parochial schools were more likely to host sports because they had greater control of the leagues and protocols than their public counterparts. This may have contributed to enrollment shifts favoring private and parochial schools during the pandemic (Reilly, 2020), and it raises concerns about how this trend may continue in the longer term.

Reimagining the Youth Sport System

The youth sport system in the United States could be better leveraged to support the development, health and well-being of young people, and this has been made particularly evident with the

COVID-19 pandemic exposing and exacerbating inequities and sub-optimal practices in youth sport. Without deliberate efforts to reimagine youth sport and commit to broad dissemination of critical changes, the vision of the NYSS to provide quality youth sport to all young people in the country will remain elusive. Below are a set of changes recommended by the 2020–2021 President’s Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board that will help to cultivate a more developmentally sound youth sport system. These changes were guided by key documents (e.g., NYSS, DHHS, 2019; *Sport for All Playbook*, Aspen Institute Project Play, 2015; *PCSFN Science Board Report on Youth Sports*, President’s Council on Sports & Fitness & Nutrition Science Board, 2020b); recent webinars (e.g., Aspen Institute Project Play, 2020a; Laureus Sport for Good Foundation USA, 2020; Up2Us Sports, 2020); and academic and industry research and presentations (e.g., Bergholz et al., 2016; Bowers & Ozyurtcu, 2018; Dorsch et al., 2020; Gould, 2019; Holt et al., 2017; Hunt et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2019; Vella, 2019; Whitley et al., 2018, 2019).

These are philosophical and practical changes that will require significant work and coordination and that may be resisted by entities with a vested interest in the status quo. Accordingly, there will need to be progressive phases of change across multiple levels of influence (e.g., individual, family, school, organization, community). The focus here is on the earliest phases of change, which are designed to offer a common frame of reference for implementing developmentally sound youth sport and to motivate expanded efforts in later phases of change. Within each subsection, there is a set of actionable takeaways for stakeholders across the youth sport system, with an emphasis on changes with the greatest



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potential for wide-ranging benefits to young people's development, health and well-being. Though some of these takeaways will require more support and funding than others, they are believed to be realistic and achievable, particularly when collaboration, partnerships, and ingenuity are prioritized.

Systems Thinking. The decentralized approach to youth sport in the United States has resulted in disjointed and inconsistent efforts to optimize the developmental benefits of sport (Bowers et al., 2010, 2011). Systems thinking must be embraced to more consistently and fully support young people's development, health, and well-being. Such thinking includes recognition that youth sport is impacted by individuals, families, teams, organizations, communities, and broader environments (Dorsch et al., 2020). These stakeholders and contexts must be engaged and afforded opportunities to work in unison to achieve the positive potential of youth sport.

One way to approach this is to align inside-up, top-down and outside-in efforts (see Mintzberg, 2006; Whitley et al., 2013). Local ownership and support (i.e., inside-up) is likely to lead to sport opportunities for youth that are sustainable, contextually relevant and culturally informed. Governmental support (i.e., top-down) promotes positive youth sport outcomes through policies, infrastructure, contracts, guidance, education, funding, and supplies. Finally, external support (i.e., outside-in) leverages funding, strategic partnerships, and innovation to encourage positive change. The recent efforts to galvanize a more organized and centralized youth sport system in the United States, such as the NYSS (DHHS, 2019) and the *Sport for All Playbook* (Aspen Institute Project Play, 2015), should be integrated with local needs and initiatives — along with partnership building — as youth sport is reimaged. The strategies below reflect a systems thinking approach:

1. Use the NYSS, *Sport for All Playbook*, the *American Medical Society for Sports Medicine's Play.Stay.Thrive Toolkit* (2021), and other evidence-based resources to frame and administer youth sport programs.
2. Ensure that youth sport remains locally driven, contextually relevant and culturally informed, with youth fully engaged in the design and delivery of their own youth sport experiences (e.g., through youth advisory boards), along with other local stakeholders (e.g., coaches, parents, teachers, community leaders).
3. Consider how national organizations such as the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee and the national governing bodies can better support and collaborate with youth sport organizations to be more inclusive, equitable, and effective.
4. Promote robust communication across all stakeholders at all levels (e.g., at convenings hosted by the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee and national governing bodies, at local parent-coach-teacher forums), enabling support for young people's development within each sport, as well as transference of skills and benefits to other domains.
5. Engage nontraditional partners such as city planners, pediatricians, chambers of commerce, faith-based groups, AmeriCorps, and local community boards to develop and support innovative initiatives (e.g., year of national service for high school athletes to work in youth sport programs after graduation; city planners partnering with local youth advisory boards to co-design outdoor play spaces).
6. Cultivate partnerships among youth sport programs and national or local youth-oriented organizations (e.g., Big

Brothers Big Sisters of America) to recruit coaches, mentors, and other adult volunteers to support youth sport programs.

7. Advocate for policy efforts that support developmentally driven youth sport, because action-based advocacy is critical to create the orienting framework for change.
8. Use concepts from behavioral economics to promote individual behavior change across all stakeholders in the youth sport system, such as changing parent education workshops to opt-out rather than opt-in participation.
9. Evaluate youth sport programs and strategies with a sensitivity to local cultural and contextual concerns and a focus on efficacy, adaptation, and innovation. Partner with local universities, public health experts, and sports medicine experts to strengthen validity of metrics and facilitate sharing of findings.
10. Create a national system to capture and share data on youth sport involvement and outcomes, similar to efforts in the state of Michigan in the late 1970s to assess and track the state of youth sport (Gould, 2019).
11. Share data in a clear, accessible manner such that parents and others can assess the quality of youth sport programs, such as the Safe Stars example in Tennessee (Diamond et al., 2019).

These ideas set the philosophical tone that reinforces a developmental approach to youth sport and offer a foundation for the additional proposed changes outlined below. They touch on interconnected themes that are essential to meeting the needs of young athletes, specifically: youth engagement, local stakeholder engagement, communication, collaboration and partnerships, learning and assessment, and national/regional guidance, coordination, and support.

Access. Young people cannot benefit from the developmental context of sport if they are not able to participate. Ensuring universal access to safe, affordable, and fun sport options that are inclusive and developmentally appropriate is crucial. In order to expand access:

1. Use the *American Development Model* (United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee, 2014) to ensure alignment of youth sport with a young person's growing capabilities and a commitment to fun, including offering both participation and competition tracks that are not mutually exclusive.
2. Choose locations for youth sport programs that will ensure safe and inclusive access, taking transportation options into account.
3. Adapt or modify sport activities, equipment, and spaces to meet the needs of youth of all abilities.
4. Understand what sport experiences most interest and engage youth. Consider formal vs. informal sport structure; individual vs. team organization; and introductory, recreational, and competitive levels of competition.
5. Increase the range of sport options available to youth, regardless of age and ability, including recreational, cooperative, and esport alternatives to complement traditional competitive sport.
6. Offer sport in elementary schools as well as intramural and pickup sport in middle and high schools, emphasizing a broad range of sport activities.
7. Provide opportunities for youth of all ages to sample sports through events such as community sport days and free clinics that involve a diversity of local teams and clubs.

8. Enable youth to design and lead their own sport experiences; for example, create a skateboarding club in which youth identify activity spaces, recruit peers, and organize practice sessions.
9. Align sport with cultural interests and practices, such as establishing cross-generational teams if connection to community elders is a powerful folkway.
10. Understand contextual, religious, and other community or cultural factors that may prevent youth from participating; for example, if traveling to other neighborhoods is problematic or unsafe, ensure local access to activity spaces; in a community with a large orthodox Jewish population, avoid events on Saturdays.
11. When fees or other expenditures are involved, reduce the cost of sport participation through partnerships, such as local businesses sponsoring local teams or aiding with transportation to programming.
12. Consider shared use agreements for facilities and spaces, enabling the general public to use school facilities and grounds outside of school hours and equipping schools to access local play spaces for recess and intramural programs.
13. Raise awareness of sport opportunities available to youth through marketing, school facilitation, or culturally embedded advocates such as *promotoras* (i.e., lay Hispanic and/or Latinx community health promoters with specialized training).
14. Seek and advocate for funding for community sport programs that expands access for youth marginalized and disadvantaged due to race, disability, gender identity or expression, sexual identity or expression, and others.
15. Fund these ideas (above and below) by adopting a market-based business model that conceives of “professionalized” and “developmental” models of youth sport as mutually reinforcing and integrated. This enables greater saturation of facility usage, support for training for coaches and other adults supporting youth, and broader community coalitions and partnerships that expand the reach of other deeply needed, but underprovided, services in such areas as mental health and physical education.

Time and Relationships. Though the type and degree of overscheduling varies widely, one reality many young people share across the United States is a daily time constraint (Abeles, 2015). This can lead young people to undervalue or overlook the time required for addressing their well-being. Young people need spaces that reinforce an investment in developing healthy habits, sharing their feelings and experiences, and connecting with others. The ideas below represent ways youth sport stakeholders can facilitate this:

1. Form partnerships across the youth sport system and beyond, including with schools, clubs, and faith-based organizations, to ensure youth have the requisite time, space, and support to attend to their development, health and well-being.
2. Provide time for free play along with structured activities, because this affords the opportunity to connect with others and share experiences.
3. To cultivate relationships where young people feel safe and supported, organize sport-based mentorship programs with diverse formats, including adult-to-youth, peer-to-peer, group, long-distance, and cross-generational.
4. Offer both structured and unstructured opportunities for one-on-one, small-group, and large-group interactions that facilitate connections and support well-being.

5. Improve training for adults on cultivating safety, trust and relationship building interactions in youth sport (please refer as well to the subsection on trained adults).
6. Support youth in facilitating and leading such interactions.
7. Encourage youth to connect with one another outside of formal programming, engaging in free play, playing sports, and sharing experiences.
8. Consider how the online environment can expand access to these opportunities, giving attention to technology gaps that may limit access.

Activity. Though physical activity may seem integral to youth sport, research indicates that there are times when sport skill development, life skill development, or even behavior management take priority (Pfeiffer & Wierenga, 2019; Whitley et al., 2019). These other priorities are important to successful implementation of youth sport; however, helping young people also meet the daily physical activity guidelines (i.e., at least 60 min a day of moderate to vigorous physical activity and 3 days of muscle- and bone-strengthening activity) will maximize the benefits of participation (Loprinzi et al., 2018; DHHS, 2018). The following actions can help increase young people’s engagement in physical activity during sport:

1. Set goals prioritizing physical activity using guidance from well-researched sources such as the NYSS (DHHS, 2019), the *Sport for All Playbook* (Aspen Institute Project Play, 2015), and the National Physical Activity Plan (National Physical Activity Plan Alliance, 2020).
2. Consider how drills, skills practice and other activities can be restructured to incorporate more physical activity (e.g., keep instruction time brief, minimize lines and/or wait time, quickly manage transitions).
3. Merge life skill instruction and movement activities to facilitate more physical activity while learning.
4. Empower youth to lead drills and skills “stations” and participate in free play activities while coaches instruct smaller groups.
5. Encourage adults to set a positive example by being physically active, participating in sports, and playing sports with youth.
6. Decrease time spent on behavior management, which can be accomplished by providing dynamic and youth-driven sport opportunities that limit idle time and by having a concise set of rules.

Trained Adults. Designing and implementing high-quality training for coaches, mentors, parents, and other adults supporting youth in sport is a monumental task (Newman et al., 2020; Thrower et al., 2016), particularly when many of these adults are volunteers. Yet, the extent to which sport participation produces benefits over detriments ties to the preparation and engagement of adults throughout the youth sport system. Though it would be ideal to have a comprehensive, systematic approach to this education across the United States, the ideas presented below are the most basic — and most critical — related to the development, health, and well-being of young people:

1. Use resources such as the NYSS (DHHS, 2019) and *Sport for All Playbook* (Aspen Institute Project Play, 2015) to frame trainings and education.

2. Emphasize that fun is a primary motive for youth in sport and educate adults about how to create experiences that are both dynamic and enjoyable.
3. Provide clear guidelines for how each group of adults supporting youth (e.g., coaches, mentors, parents) can contribute to young people's well-being. Training themes should address how to create
 - (a) a safe, caring, stable climate;
 - (b) long-lasting adult and peer relationships founded upon respect and trust;
 - (c) an environment focused on mastery and personal improvement;
 - (d) support for choice and autonomy; and
 - (e) individualized, holistic development in conjunction with sport skill development.

These educational themes can be complemented and reinforced by explicit training on cultural competence, trauma-informed practices, social-emotional learning, healthy competition, prevention of relationship violence and sexual misconduct, and addressing societal conflicts.
4. Educate parents, in particular, about managing personal expectations for their children, protecting them from overscheduling, and advocating for developmentally sound youth sport experiences. Parents are important decision makers who direct family energy, time, and resources and therefore have great power to shape their children's experiences in sport and to create a more developmentally sound youth sport landscape.
5. Train and support a diverse span of adults at no/low cost who represent the local community, increasing the likelihood that youth will receive contextually and culturally resonant sport experiences.
6. Engage youth and other local stakeholders (e.g., coaches, parents, teachers, community leaders) in the design and delivery of trainings (e.g., ask for guidance from youth sport captains, local community boards and groups representing different disadvantaged and marginalized youth). This will ensure that the content is locally driven, contextually relevant, and culturally informed.
7. Provide free sample drills, games, and scenarios (e.g., car/bus ride home) that help adults learn to teach life skills that support young people's development, health, and well-being.
8. Cultivate local, regional and national partnerships with organizations like Positive Coaching Alliance, Up2Us Sports, the Center for Healing and Justice through Sport, and Doc Wayne Youth Services, with expertise to guide the design and delivery of training.
9. Build on lessons learned from virtual sessions and online resources developed during the pandemic to enhance virtual training and expand access in the postpandemic environment.
10. Adopt a "train the trainer" model of education to increase access and reduce cost.
11. Consider when it may be appropriate to leverage the "power of the permit," which requires trained coaches to be present as a condition of field and/or facility use.
12. Encourage businesses at the local and national levels to help defray the cost of equipment for youth sport programs that train coaches, mentors, parents, and other adults supporting youth.
13. Design and deliver intentional onboarding and supervision for new coaches, mentors, parents, and others.
14. Provide a simple behavioral checklist for each group of adults supporting youth (e.g., coaches, mentors, parents), like the one

for coaches developed by the Aspen Institute Project Play (2019) and the one for parents adapted by the American Academy of Pediatrics (Logan et al., 2019).

15. Consider a mentoring program in which more experienced and trained coaches, mentors, parents and others are partnered with those with less experience and/or training to provide ongoing modeling of appropriate behavior, training, individualized feedback, and one-on-one support.
16. Use high-level marketing strategies and concepts from behavioral economics to motivate adults to engage in the training and education available to them.

In addition to high-quality training and education, adults supporting young people in the youth sport system need support and resources. This can be achieved through the following steps:

1. Cultivate in-person and virtual communities of adults within and across their roles (e.g., coaches, mentors, parents), such that adults support one another as well as the youth they serve.
2. Teach adults working with young people how to recognize their own stressors and how to apply coping skills to address them.
3. Ensure access to free online resources and virtual trainings to help adults build their knowledge about youth sport and address their own development, health, and well-being needs.
4. Provide structured opportunities for reflection at regular intervals during in-person and virtual meetings.

Conclusion

This article offers a systems-based frame of reference for implementing developmentally sound youth sport. A reimagining of youth sport to tightly align with promoting young people's development, health, and well-being yields a variety of recommendations for change. The actionable takeaways offered in this article are intended to equip stakeholders with specific ways to meaningfully improve the sport options and experiences available to young people. We — the 2020–2021 President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board — invite you to join us in advancing the NYSS (DHHS, 2019), with the hope "that one day all youth will have the opportunity, motivation, and access to play sports, regardless of their race, ethnicity, sex, ability, or ZIP code."

Note

The 2020–2021 President's Council on Sports, Fitness & Nutrition Science Board has also published a commentary in the *Translational Journal of the American College of Sports Medicine* (Whitley et al., 2021) that re-envision youth sport as it relates to young people's mental, emotional, and social health in the postpandemic era. Readers are invited to read these articles in tandem.

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