



TOOLKIT

# Engaging Coaches

MISSOURI FOUNDATION FOR HEALTH

## Healthy Schools Healthy Communities

LET'S BUILD A HEALTHIER FUTURE

*In 2013, Missouri Foundation for Health established the **Healthy Schools Healthy Communities** (HSHC) initiative to address childhood obesity in select areas. HSHC brought together schools, community organizations, businesses, parents, and other residents to identify and advocate for changes that increase access to healthy food and physical activity where our kids live, learn, and play. This toolkit was originally developed as part of the initiative and has been adapted for statewide use.*

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# Tips to Connect

*Coaches are often role models and leaders in a community. Kids listen and look up to them. Parents trust them to look out for their kids and teach them lifelong skills. Coaches are committed to getting kids active and healthy – on and off the field. For these reasons and many more, coaches can be terrific messengers and spokespeople for your work to build a healthier community.*

*Coaches are a natural fit to support your efforts. They can motivate kids and connect the dots between staying active, eating right, and performing at their best. Coaches often have a direct line to parents and can pass along information when they send schedules and other information home. Most importantly, coaches have a vested interest in the health of the children in their community.*

## 1. Identify Coaches in Your Community

You will see the word “coach” throughout this toolkit - this can be anyone in your community who is a trusted messenger and can speak with authority on the importance of physical activity and/or fitness. Some ideas include:

- High school sports coaches (baseball, track, basketball, etc.)
- Recreational sports coaches (little league, youth soccer, etc.)
- Physical education teachers
- Recreation center fitness instructors (swim, dance, etc.)
- Running club leaders, or similar sports enthusiasts

## 2. Determine the Best Fit

To determine who might be the best fit to communicate about Healthy Schools Healthy Communities, consider these questions:

- Are they well known and respected throughout the community?
- How many families can be reached through their networks?
- Is their “sport” in season? Can that help reach more parents and community members?
- Have they participated in my activities in the past?
- Can they help me make additional connections in the school or community?

### 3. Make the Ask

If you don't already know or have contact information for the coaches you are hoping to connect with, ask your committee members if they have a direct connection. Try to set up an in-person meeting or phone call with each coach. In your conversations, communicate why Healthy Schools Healthy Communities is important to the children of your community. And why they, as a coach and leader in the community, have an important role to play in the success of your efforts.

My name is [insert name] and I'm [role in school/community]. Through [organization], we're working to build a healthier future right here in [community].

As part of our work, we want to increase access to physical activity and healthy food for our kids. To date, we've done this through things like [insert examples of activities underway].

I know you are dedicated to your kids, both on and off the field. They trust you, and their parents trust you. And when it comes to relaying information about the importance of being healthy and active, we think you can play an important role.

We'd like to work with you to help spread the word about our efforts. We've thought of some opportunities that you might be interested in, but we'd also love to hear any other ideas you have.

*At this point, if the coach has expressed interest in learning more, start to identify some "asks" that you'd like to make – speaking at an event, sending a letter home to parents, talking to kids about the importance of being active, etc. (check out the next few pages for more ideas).*

*If the coach is willing to participate in some or all of your asks, let him/her know that you will follow up within the next week to discuss further/take the next step.*



“We got pedometers, and the coach helped teach children how to use them to read their heart rates and how fast they were walking. When they started getting tired, I asked, what did the coach teach you to do?”

Petra B., St. Louis, MO

# Events

*Depending on the audience and goals of the event, coaches can play an important role in reinforcing your message or building out the event program. Consider some of the following ideas to bring coaches into your event(s).*

## Attend and Participate

Sometimes simply attending an event can be enough for community members to see that it's important to someone they trust. Even better if the coaches can promote their attendance by telling their friends and neighbors or posting to their Facebook page.

## Promote

If you are hosting an event open to the public, ask the coach if they would be willing to send event information home to parents. Provide them with a flyer or language they can add to an email they were already planning to send (such as schedules, end-of-season gatherings, etc.). Ask coaches to spread the word to other school staff or community members in their circle.

### Don't Forget!

Mention the coach's name in your event promotion. It might encourage more people to attend.

## Host or Emcee

Coaches can bring energy and excitement to an event. If you're hosting a rally or 5k, for example, see if they'd be willing to run the program. Provide them with a few talking points to kick off the event, explaining why they support your efforts.

If possible, take pictures of the coach at the event. You can share those photos with local media covering the event or post them on Facebook to thank them for attending (and show off their attendance to your other followers!).



“Whenever the school staff and I come up with ideas, Coach Justin will always ask, ‘How does it benefit the kids?’ Because when we’re talking about ideas, it doesn’t go back to that every time. It’s usually about us: ‘Do I want to put on another fundraiser? Do I need to stay after school to volunteer for this?’ Even if I’m like, ‘Okay, this would be another after school program,’ he’ll say, ‘Well, what’s best for the kids?’ ‘Okay, then. Let’s do it!’”

Kelsey C., Jefferson City, MO

# Social Media

*If you maintain or have access to a Facebook page or website where you can promote Healthy Schools Healthy Communities, leverage coaches to increase engagement on your page. It's also a great opportunity to share physical activity tips and information from a trusted source.*

## Promote Facebook Page

Ask the coaches to follow your Facebook page so they can stay up to date with your activities. See if they'd consider "sharing" your page with their networks.

### Sample Facebook Post

Did you know there's a group right here in [community] working to help our kids stay healthy and have a chance to eat right and get active? Check out the @[insert your Facebook page name] page to learn more.

## Post and Share Videos

Ask coaches to use their phones (or your own) to record 30-60 second videos featuring inspirational messages for kids and families, encouraging them to stay active once they leave the field or court. The video can be as simple as the coach speaking directly to the camera. They can share tips for how to get moving, or a video of themselves doing an easy activity or exercise that anyone can do. Videos could be part of a "coach's challenge" to ask others to record themselves doing the same activity in the community.

## Post a Quote

Share an inspirational or instructional message from a coach on your Facebook page. If possible, get or take a photo of the coach.



“

Kids need 60 minutes of play in each day. Whether it's on the field, in the pool, at home or at the park - there are lots of ways to get active!

”

- Coach Miller

# Local Media

*We recommend engaging local media – including the local newspaper, radio, and television – when you have a larger story to tell. This could be announcing a new partnership, debuting a new program in the community, promoting an event or activity, pushing for policy changes, and more. Coaches are great third-party validators who can help reinforce your message and pique the attention of the community.*

## Include a Quote in a Press Release

If you are planning to send local media a press release, consider asking a coach if you can include a quote to support the information you are pitching. It may help to provide them with a sample quote and invite them to personalize it to make it their own. Make sure the quote is related to the topic of the press release, such as:

### Sample Quote: Announcing Park Upgrades

“This new park gives kids a chance to get active outside of school or team activities. Kids need 60 minutes of play each day and with access to new equipment, we’re giving them fun ways to get active and be healthy.”

## Author or Co-Author an Op-Ed

The opinion page of your local newspaper is a great way to reach key stakeholders in the community. It can be a particularly effective way of promoting policy or environmental changes that you are seeking to build support for. By having a coach author an op-ed, it demonstrates to community members that someone they trust is invested and behind the changes you are seeking. Depending on the topic, consider inviting multiple coaches to co-author an op-ed together. This is a great way to show the breadth of your community collaborative and how key members are working together to help children and families in your community. Alternately, you may want to pair a coach with a community leader who can each bring distinct perspectives to the topic.

## Coach’s Corner

If you have a monthly column in your local newspaper or space on your website, consider inviting coaches to be guest columnists, or create a devoted “Coach’s Corner” where they can share their viewpoints on physical activity and healthy eating. You can invite coaches from across your community to participate, depending on the time of year and the sports that are in season - ensuring diverse voices who connect with different members of the community.

# Engaging Parents

*Coaches have a direct line of communication to parents in your community. Though their communications home won't reach all parents or families, it's a start it and can encourage other parents to spread the word.*

## Email to Team Parents

Make it easy for coaches to send information home. If they are distributing paperwork to parents, ask them to include an HSHC flyer or palm card. If they have an email distribution list (such as the team list), share 2-3 sentences about HSHC that they can easily drop into an email they were already planning to send.

### Sample Email Language

I wanted to pass along some information about an effort right here in [insert community] to help kids lead healthier lives. It's called [insert]. They are working to [insert local efforts such as 'improve our parks and make our streets safer for walking']. This will make getting active easier for your kids. If you'd like to get involved, contact [insert name and email/phone].

## Send a Letter or Palm Card Home

Often times at the beginning of a season, coaches send paperwork, jerseys, or other information home. Ask coaches to include a letter to introduce parents to your work and explain their support. You should plan to write and print the letter.

## Plug at Sign Up Days or Team Events

During tryouts or sign-up days for local leagues, ask coaches to make a plug for your work or have materials available for parents to take home. They can also do this during team events, such as awards ceremonies or end-of-season get togethers. Ask the coach to share a few remarks about the importance of increasing access to physical activity and healthy eating in the community and how families can get involved.



“The biggest challenge is to get our families to come out together to do healthy things. The initiative offers this and that, and we'll let the parents know. But sometimes it's like pulling teeth trying to get a parent to participate. We want the parent to also be a part. We want the whole family. We need that parent to come and grab a hold of what's going on, because it's important.

Dana M., St. Louis, MO

# Additional Asks

*Are they looking to get more involved?*

## Announcements at Games and Pep Rallies

Ask coaches to plug your efforts during halftimes or before games. See if they can help you arrange a table at a local game where you can distribute information about your efforts. Ask if they would be willing to promote the importance of staying active and eating healthy at pep rallies before the big game.

## Outreach to Policymakers

As you are seeking policy and environmental changes in your community, ask coaches who share in your mission to advocate for those changes. Ask them to submit a letter to local policymakers in support of your efforts. See if they'll join you for community meetings where together you can speak to the importance of the changes you are seeking.

## Promoting Your Facebook Page

Ask the coaches to follow your Facebook page so they can stay up to date with your activities. See if they'd consider "sharing" your page with their networks.

## Promoting Healthy Concessions

Ask a coach for a quote about why healthy drinks and snacks are so important and feature the quote with their photo on a poster at the healthy concessions stand!

*Don't forget to **thank the coaches you've engaged** for their participation and commitment to your efforts. If possible, recognize them publicly – they may be more likely to keep up their engagement. Post a thank you note on Facebook or mention their efforts in school or community newsletters.*