

Many of our youth from marginalized groups and under-resourced communities experience a disparity in access, opportunities, resources, and outcomes in youth sports based on systemic barriers and unequal resource distribution. The disparity between their access and experience and that of their more privileged counterparts is called the sports equity gap. When organizations commit to identifying and addressing the equity gaps that exist in their sports programs, they can ensure access to positive sports experiences for all youth in their communities.

The following tips will help sports leaders create more inclusive sports programs.

## SPORTS LEADERS CAN:

### 1. Identify Equity Gaps

- ✔ Use data collection and analyzing tools such as PCA's [Equity Gap Calculator](#) to:
  - Identify target areas to examine for equity gaps - focusing on access, retention, or experience quality.
  - Collect data broken down by race, ethnicity, gender, or other dimensions of identity you choose to explore.
  - Calculate the percentage gap to measure how underserved groups compare to those with the highest participation.
  - Analyze results using these insights to use targeted strategies to address specific disparities in sports organizations.

### 2. Build the Capacity of Youth Sports Administrators

*Sport Administrators are key to creating equitable youth sports programs by setting the tone, establishing policies, and shaping program accessibility.*

- ✔ Equip administrators to lead inclusively.
- ✔ Provide administrators with training in [cultural proficiency](#), equity-focused leadership, and awareness of systemic barriers to enable them to recognize biases and implement policies that support inclusivity and fair access.

### 3. Engage with Underserved Communities

- ✔ Use best practices in community engagement:
  - Build trust and relevance by listening to community voices and tailoring programs to meet their needs.
  - Host events at accessible locations, such as schools and community centers to introduce families to programs.
  - Involve respected local leaders as ambassadors to foster trust and create a welcoming environment.



## 4. Diversify and Recruit Coaches

*Representation matters, and a diverse coaching staff can help create a more inclusive environment where youth feel seen and supported. Coaches from similar backgrounds as participants can serve as relatable role models, inspiring confidence and engagement.*

- ✔ Recruit and retain coaches from underrepresented groups by applying targeted strategies, such as those outlined in Positive Coaching Alliance's [Coach Recruitment Tips](#) resource.

## 5. Collective Action

*Creating equitable opportunities in youth sports requires collaboration. While Positive Coaching Alliance (PCA) leads and collaborates with several Sports Equity Coalitions nationwide, we're not alone in this effort.*

- ✔ Research coalitions in your area, for example: [King County Play Equity Coalition](#), [Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative](#), and other regional groups amplify impact by offering shared resources, advocacy, and best practices.
- ✔ Work together with local organizations to tackle systemic barriers more effectively and reinforce a collective commitment to inclusive youth sports.

## 6. Offer High-Quality Coach Education Programs

*Quality coaching is crucial for retaining young athletes and ensuring they have positive, equitable experiences in sports.*

- ✔ Prioritize coach education to reinforce the commitment to ensuring all youth experience the benefits of an inclusive sports environment.
- ✔ Identify training programs that help coaches build empathy, sensitivity, and awareness, which help create a supportive environment for youth from all backgrounds.
  - Positive Coaching Alliance and our partners like the Center for Healing and Justice through Sport (CHJS) offer workshops in positive youth development, trauma-informed, healing-centered coaching.

Addressing equity gaps in youth sports is essential to ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to thrive through participation. By identifying disparities and implementing targeted strategies—from building internal capacity and engaging with communities to diversifying coaching staff and fostering partnerships—youth sports organizations can create truly inclusive

