

How to Start a Female After-School Sports Program

1. Overview

This CMYI Information Sheet is designed to provide sporting providers, community agencies and workers in the human services sector with a simple step-by-step guide to establishing an after school sport program for culturally and linguistically diverse young women. The information has been developed as a result of requests made by service providers and local councils to the CMYI Multicultural Sport and Recreation Project (funded by VicHealth and Sport & Recreation Victoria).

This information sheet is divided into three sections:

1. The Development Phase
2. Program Components
3. Case Study

Based on best practice principles and experience in the sector, the information contained in this document is designed only as a guide and should be modified according to local circumstances.

For further information contact the CMYI *Multicultural Sport & Recreation Officer* on **(03) 9349 3466**

2. The Development Phase

There are three key elements associated with the development phase of a female after school sports program. These are:

2.1 Needs Analysis: Identify the need and viability of establishing the program. This stage should involve...

- *Community Consultation* with relevant ethnic organisations, community leaders and community members, including the young women themselves.
- *Research* into the demographics of the area and the likelihood of program success.
- *Identification of similar best-practice models* to assist in avoiding past mistakes.

2.2 Establish a project plan and identify possible issues: In establishing a sport project for young Muslim women, a number of areas need to be thoroughly addressed prior to the project start...

- Gaining support and trust of parents.
- Location and supervision of program – safe and reliable; preferably a location known to parents.
- Time and duration – after dark is often not an option for CLD young women.
- Does the environment need to be female only? This could affect choice of instructors and location.
- Is there a need for translation of materials?
- Is the provision of transport necessary?

2.3 Recruit Key Stakeholders:

- Identify groups, individuals and organisations needed to support the project. This could include leisure centres, sport clubs, schools and community groups.
- Ensure that all stakeholders are committed to supporting and taking ownership of the program. Regular steering committee meetings further effective project facilitation and adherence to original aims and objectives.

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3. Program Components: Implementing the Program

The key elements associated with a successful and sustainable female after school sport program are:

3.1 Funding / Sustainability: The program organisers need to ensure an appropriate plan is in place to support program sustainability once funding has been exhausted. Keep in mind that your budget should include additional expenditure in the preliminary stages to cover any initial losses. Projects can sometimes start slowly before gaining momentum. Sustainability can be achieved through...

- Charging participants a small fee each week to cover program costs.
- Enrolling committed participants in a coaching course to assist with on-going coaching.

3.2 Training: If the stakeholders (including the instructors) have limited experience working with CLD groups, it may be a good idea to offer relevant cross-cultural training.

3.3 Flexibility: Program organisers need to be flexible in responding to feedback from the participants and stakeholders. On-going project evaluation, whether informal or formal, can assist with this process.

3.4 Support: A project such as this one relies on the support of its key partners. Without full commitment from each group, success and sustainability may wain, leading to eventual project failure. If the teachers in the school are unable to fully commit to promoting or supporting the students for example, numbers may never reach desired capacity.

4. Case Study: Female after school sport program

The need to develop a Muslim girls' after school sport program was identified following discussions with young Muslim women in Melbourne's northern suburbs. Initial planning involved consulting with young women and cultural workers in the area. The consultation process involved ascertaining the type of activities of interest, appropriate costs, times, locations and cultural needs (eg. female instructors).

The CMYI project officer then began meeting with possible project stakeholders. A number of appropriate schools, leisure centres and sports clubs in the area were identified and contacted. A community sports stadium was the most suitable location for the program due to its appropriate facilities (ensuring privacy), accessible location and the management's commitment to becoming a key partner. Two out of five schools contacted confirmed that they would participate in the program and actively promote it within the school, as well as providing supervision and transport if required. Finally, the local Women's Sport Club offered to provide coaches for a soccer program on a volunteer basis.

To ensure the programs' sustainability, participants were charged \$2 per session, which covered the cost of stadium hire. CMYI provided the sporting equipment and the stadium staff managed any administration on the day. PE staff at the schools were provided with an information letter to circulate to students and they promoted the program within the school at school and class assemblies. It was confirmed that there was no need for translation of materials. Strategies used to gain parents' support of the program included:

- Clear information dissemination;
- The program being supported by the school;
- The program being held in a familiar environment;
- The program taking place straight after school.

Verbal and written feedback was obtained from the students, coaches, teachers and leisure centre staff. This assisted in the ongoing development of the program. Participant feedback received during the first term of the project resulted in a venue change, to a more accessible location in second term. The sport also changed from soccer to basketball, which proved to be a more popular among the students.

Centre for Multicultural Youth Issues

Level 1, 308 Drummond St, CARLTON VIC 3053
Ph:(03) 9349 3466 Fax:(03) 9349 3766 Email: info@cmyi.net.au Website: www.cmyi.net.au

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