A joint use agreement is a formal agreement between two separate government entities — often a school district and a city or county — outlining the terms and conditions for the shared use of public property or facilities such as playgrounds, sports fields and gymnasiums.

Benefits of Joint Use Agreements

1. **Joint use agreements provide children and families a safe space to exercise and play.** Schools have a variety of facilities — playgrounds, gymnasiums, and sports fields — that are closed to the public after school hours due to concerns about vandalism, security, maintenance and liability in the event of injury. Joint-use agreements address these concerns by allocating some or all of the associated costs and liability to the local government.

2. **Joint use agreements help address obesity by making it easier to get out and play.** In many communities, there is no appropriate facility or safe outdoor space for kids to play, which results in more of our keiki staying inside and watching television or playing video games. Access to safe spaces such as school playgrounds, gymnasiums, running tracks, tennis courts, basketball courts and other facilities encourages families to get out of the house and participate in physical activity.

3. **Costs can be kept down by opening the most in-demand facilities.** Joint-use agreements can help break down barriers to health in communities that are most in need. In San Francisco, the city and school district’s joint-use agreement opens up just the school playgrounds on the weekends. In Seattle, the city and school district have made it much easier for individuals and groups to reserve school facilities. In other cities, school facilities are only opened up in the most under-resourced communities.

4. **Joint use agreements help address health equity.** Low-income communities suffer the most as they have the fewest parks and facilities and tend to also have fewer transportation options. This means that people in under-resourced communities have very few or no opportunities for physical activity and we see that disparity carried over in health outcomes. Because joint-use agreements make use of existing facilities, they can be a pragmatic, effective tool to help address health equity.

Find more information at changelabsolutions.org/shared-use