



Youth Sports in Montgomery County

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Youth Sports in Montgomery County

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Summary

Physical activity generally and sports specifically have numerous benefits for children and youth. However, national data show that participation in sports is declining among children and youth. Additionally, disparities in participation exist by race and ethnicity, gender, and family income. This Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report reviews national research on youth sports and examines the youth sports landscape in Montgomery County. OLO found that while some affordable and recreational youth sports programs exist, youth sports provision overall in Montgomery County is not well-aligned with the needs of many families.

Youth Sports in the United States

An extensive body of research shows that physical activity has numerous and significant health, cognitive and academic benefits for children and adolescents. Yet, only about a quarter of children in the United States did the recommended daily 60 minutes physical activity in 2016. Children who play sports are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines compared with their peers. However, survey data show that the percentage of children under age 12 who played team sports “regularly” has declined in recent years, from 42% in 2011 to 38% in 2018. Data also show wide disparities in youth sports participation by family income, gender, and race and ethnicity.

The structure of youth sports has transitioned over time from recreational leagues that rely on parent volunteers to one based more heavily on private leagues and professional training. Families reported paying an average of \$693 annually for a child to participate in a sport in a 2019 survey. Youth sports are inaccessible for many children, and children that do play sports regularly are now playing in competitive travel teams starting as early as age 6. Children are at risk for injuries and burnout, and on average, children quit a sport at age 11.

The Aspen Institute’s 8 Plays To Increase Participation

1. Ask children what they want and offer it
2. Promote free play
3. Allow children to sample different sports
4. Revitalize local recreational leagues
5. Add sports facilities in small spaces
5. Design age-appropriate sports programming
6. Offer training for coaches
7. Create policies and alternatives to reduce injuries

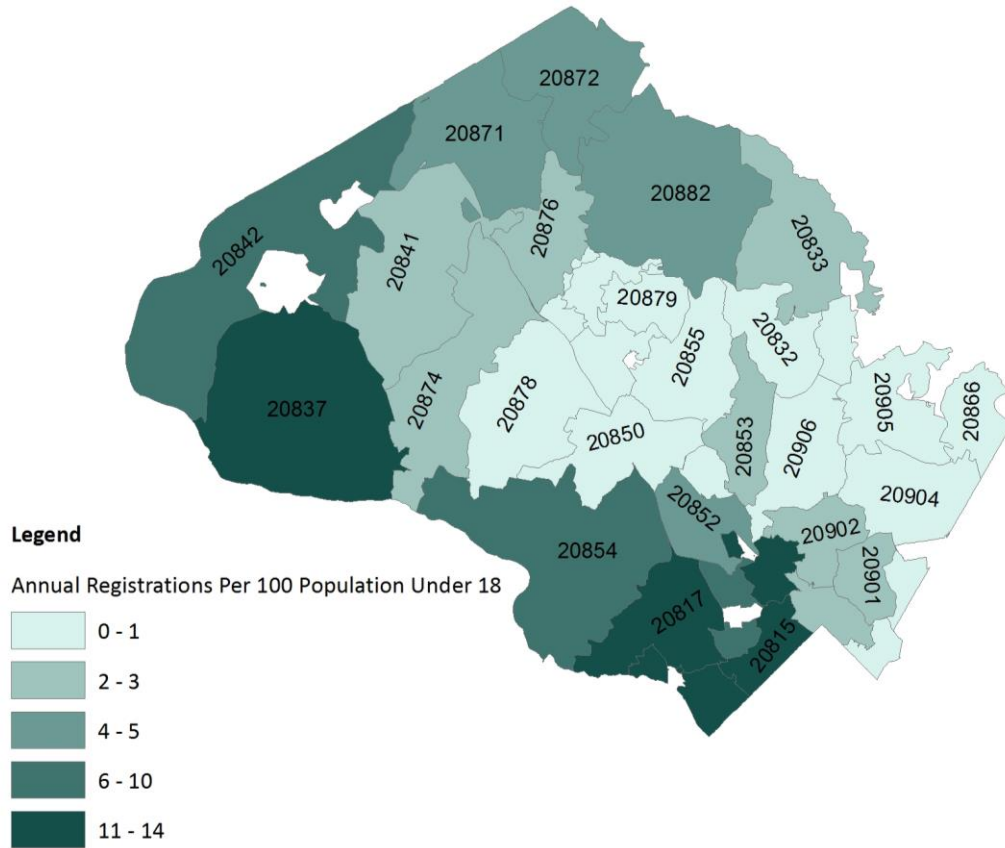
The Youth Sports Landscape in Montgomery County

Several government entities provide youth sports programming and manage sports facilities in the County, summarized below. Additionally, private and nonprofit organizations play a major role in youth sports provision.

Montgomery County Government	The Recreation Department provides recreational programs, services and facilities in the County, including youth basketball leagues. The Office of Community Use of Public Facilities issues permits for sports leagues and clubs to use public athletic facilities.
Montgomery Parks (Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission)	Montgomery Parks manages and maintains athletic facilities in its system of 422 parks and offers instructional sports programs.
Montgomery County Public Schools	MCPS operates the interscholastic athletics program at its 40 middle schools and 25 high schools.
Montgomery County Revenue Authority	The Revenue Authority provides instructional golf programs for youth and operates the MCG Juniors Golf League at its golf courses.

Recreation Department Youth Basketball. Youth basketball leagues represent the Recreation Department’s largest youth sports offering. OLO found that participation in the leagues increased from 7,500 registrations in FY17 to 8,300 in FY19. Male participants accounted for two-thirds of registrations in FY19, and participants were concentrated in the southwestern and western sections of the County.

FY17-FY19 MCRD Youth Basketball League Registrations by Participant ZIP Code Per 100 Child Population



Montgomery County Public Schools. Data on the MCPS High School Interscholastic Athletics Program show that in FY19, 20,147 rostered student-athletes participated across all high school sports, except for cheerleading and pompons, of which 11,239 (56%) were boys and 8,908 (44%) were girls. Students that had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans accounted for 2,437 (12%) rostered student-athletes in FY19. Overall participation in these sports declined slightly since FY15, when 20,483 rostered student-athletes participated.

The Office of Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF). CUPF issues permits to use publicly-owned facilities in Montgomery County, including permits for sports leagues and clubs to use athletic facilities. Athletic facilities available for booking from CUPF (MCPS, County Government and M-NCPPC-owned athletic facilities) are subject to historical use policies. Under these policies, sports leagues and sports clubs that have booked an athletic facility in the past have priority for booking the same facility during the same time period in the future.

Private and Nonprofit Sports Leagues and Clubs. Privately-operated youth sports leagues and clubs in Montgomery County play a major role in the provision of youth sports. OLO found that among those that book public athletic facilities through the Office of Community Use of Public Facilities:

- Soccer was the most common sport offered, followed closely by baseball;
- More leagues and clubs served elementary and middle school-aged children than high school youth; and
- 12 out of 89 (13%) leagues and clubs each made more than 1,000 bookings in FY19, accounting for 28,558 out of 44,873 bookings (64%) of bookings by sports leagues and clubs with historical use priority.

Stakeholders report many children in Montgomery County are playing with competitive, tryout-based leagues and clubs that employ paid coaches, charge high participant fees, and demand significant amounts of time and travel from players and their families. Recreational leagues and clubs that charge relatively low fees and do not require tryouts are thriving in some parts of the County. However, many areas lack access to affordable youth sports. For providers of youth sports providers, recruiting volunteer coaches and securing athletic facilities for their activities are two key challenges.

Families’ Experiences With Youth Sports in Montgomery County. OLO conducted an anonymous online survey of parent-teacher association (PTA) members to learn about their experiences with youth sports. Overall, respondents expressed a desire for more recreational sports that are not tryout-based, are available to children who have not played the sport before, and take place at their children’s schools. Respondents identified a variety of challenges they face in finding and participating in youth sports for their families, including:

- The time gap between the end of the school day and the start of youth sports activities presents a logistical challenge for many parents.
- Sports activities do not take place near respondents’ families’ schools or homes.
- Available sports activities are too competitive, even at very young ages.
- Cost is a significant barrier: over a third of respondents reported paying over \$2,000 annually for one child to play sports.
- Programs do not serve children with disabilities.

Recommended Discussion Issues

OLO offers three recommended discussion issues for the Council to raise with agency representatives.

- 1. Access to public athletic facilities:** The Council may wish to discuss policies and processes around community use of public athletic facilities to identify ways to support affordable sports programs and encourage free play. Note: OLO’s FY20 work program includes two projects related to community use of public facilities. These upcoming reports may inform this discussion.
- 2. Addressing silos in youth sports provision:** The Council may wish to discuss options to promote collaboration and address silos in youth sports provision, such as convening government stakeholders and youth sports providers to encourage partnerships, or organizing a sports fair to help parents learn about sports programs in their communities that are appropriate for their child.
- 3. Promoting and expanding affordable and recreational youth sports programs:** The Council may wish to discuss options for promoting and expanding affordable and recreational youth sports programs in the County, such as offering training for volunteer coaches, developing new partnerships, or expanding the public provision of youth sports.

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Introduction

Children who are physically inactive experience worse health and academic outcomes than other children, and these impacts persist through adulthood. However, national data show that children’s sports participation is decreasing – in 2018, 38% of children ages 6 to 12 participated in a team sport on a regular basis, compared with 42% in 2011. The data also show disparities in participation by family income, gender, race and ethnicity, and disability. This Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) report reviews national research on youth sports and examines the youth sports landscape in Montgomery County. In particular, this report:

- Summarizes national research on trends in children’s physical activity and youth sports participation;
- Describes the youth sports landscape in Montgomery County; and
- Presents stakeholder observations on access to youth sports in Montgomery County.

OLO staff member Natalia Carrizosa conducted this study, with assistance from Tori Hall, Sam Hellerstein and Carl Scruggs. OLO gathered information through interviews with County stakeholders, online surveys of youth sports providers and parents, and analyses of Department of Recreation and Community Use of Public Facilities Data. OLO received a high level of cooperation from everyone involved in this study and appreciates the information and insights shared by all who participated:

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Chapter 1. The National Landscape for Youth Sports

Physical activity in general and sports specifically have numerous benefits for children and youth. However, national data show that participation in sports is declining among children and youth. Additionally, disparities in sports participation exist by race and ethnicity, gender, and family income. This chapter reviews the research literature on the benefits of participation in sports and trends in youth sports participation. It also reviews best practices for promoting healthy participation in sports.

A. Physical Activity Among Children and Youth in the United States

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children and youth ages 6 through 17 should do 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. These guidelines are based on an extensive body of research that shows that physical activity has numerous and significant benefits for children and youth including:

- Higher levels of heart and lung fitness
- Stronger muscles and bones
- Reduced symptoms of depression
- Lowered risk of chronic diseases through adulthood, and
- Improved memory, executive function, attention and academic performance.¹

However, survey data indicate that only about a quarter of children and youth in the United States met this guideline in 2016. Boys are more physically active than girls, with 28% of boys meeting the guideline compared with 20% of girls. Children are less likely to meet the guideline as they age: in a 2005-2006 study that used fitness tracking devices to measure physical activity, 42.5% of 6-11 year olds met the current guideline, compared with 7.5% of 12-15 year olds and 5.1% of 16-19 year olds. Data also showed disparities in physical activity by disability status and race and ethnicity, though further study is needed in this area.²

B. Sports Participation Among Children and Youth

Children who play sports are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines compared with their peers who do not play sports.³ Furthermore, some studies indicate that playing team sports specifically is associated with additional health benefits beyond those for physical activity generally, probably because of the social nature of team sports that allows for interactions with peers and adults.⁴ However, sports participation is declining among children and youth, disparities in participation exist, and those who do play sports face risks of injury and burnout.

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans, 2nd edition*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; 2018, pp. 8, 47

² National Physical Activity Plan Alliance. *The 2018 United States Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth*. Washington, DC: National Physical Activity Plan Alliance, 2018.

³

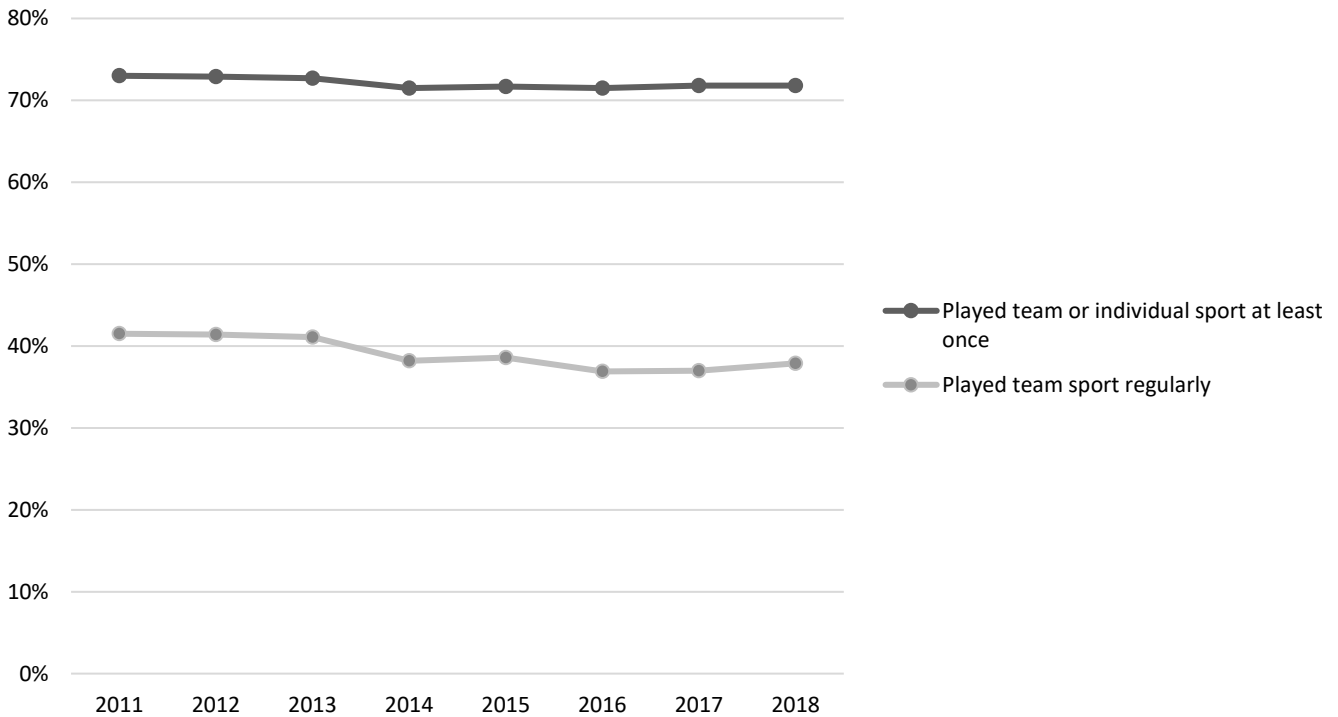
⁴ Eime RM, Young JA, Harvey JT, Charity MJ, Payne WR. A systematic review of the psychological and social benefits of participation in sport for children and adolescents: informing development of a conceptual model of health through sport. *Int J Behav Nutr Phys Act*. 2013;10:98. Published 2013 Aug 15. doi:10.1186/1479-5868-10-98

1. Sports participation rates among children

Limited data are available on participation in organized sports among children and youth over time. However, data developed by the Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) for the Aspen Institute provide insight into sports participation in recent years. The chart below displays trends in the percentages of children who played individual and team sports at least once during the year and those who played team sports “regularly.”

SFIA defines playing a sport “regularly” differently depending on the specific sport. For example, playing baseball “regularly” means playing at least 13 times during the year, while playing soccer “regularly” means playing at least 26 times in a year.⁵ Of note, the survey did not differentiate between settings, and therefore includes sports played in schools as well as in the community, and includes both organized and unstructured play.

Chart 1. Percentages of Children Ages 6-12 Who Played Team or Individual Sports*, 2011-2018



Sources: *2019 State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports*, The Aspen Institute, Project Play, 2019, and *2018 State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports*, The Aspen Institute, Project Play, 2018.

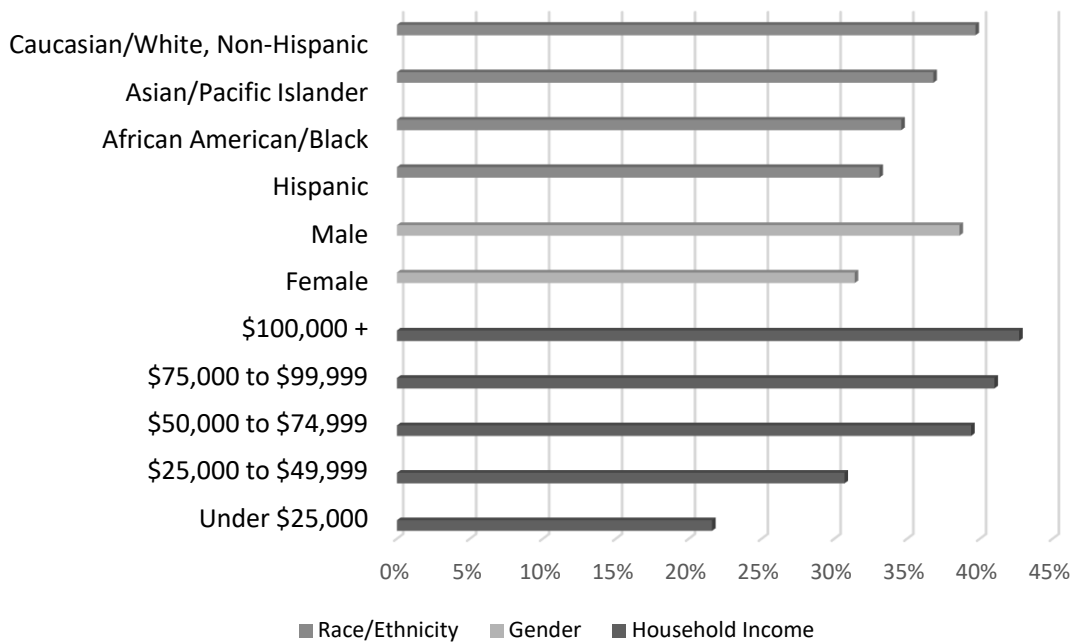
* Team sports include baseball, basketball, cheerleading, field hockey, football (flag, touch, tackle), gymnastics, ice hockey, lacrosse, paintball, roller hockey, rugby, soccer (indoor, outdoor), softball (slow-pitch, fast-pitch), swimming on a team, track and field, ultimate frisbee, volleyball (court, grass, sand), and wrestling. Individual sports include tennis, golf, martial arts, roller skating, skateboarding, running and cycling (road, BMX, mountain bike).

⁵ SFIA Topline Report, 2019

These data show that the percentages of children who played team and individual sports at least once during the year remained relatively stable from 2011 to 2018. However, the percentage of children who played team sports “regularly” declined somewhat during this period, from 42% in 2011 to 38% in 2018.⁶

The chart below displays percentages of children ages 6 through 12, by race and ethnicity, gender and household income who participated regularly in a sport in 2018. These data show that wide disparities in sports participation exist. For example, over 40% of children in families with household incomes above \$100,000 participated “regularly” in a sport in 2018, compared with just over 20% in families with household incomes under \$25,000.

Chart 2. Percentages of Children Ages 6-12 Who Participated Regularly in a Sport in 2018 By Demographic Group



Source: 2019 State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports, The Aspen Institute, Project Play, 2019.

Sport-specific trends. Participation in many sports has declined since 2008, while a few sports have seen increases. Soccer, baseball, basketball, and football are being played less, while gymnastics, lacrosse, and ice hockey are being played more.⁷

⁶ The Aspen Institute does not report margins of error for sport participation rates. According to the 2019 SFIA Topline Report, the survey on which these rates are based has a margin of error (95 percent confidence interval) of plus or minus 0.31 percentage points for sports with participation rate of 5 percent among all ages, indicating a high level of statistical accuracy.

⁷ ["Direct and Indirect Consequences," The Aspen Institute, Accessed 7/23/2019, https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/kids-facts-direct-and-indirect-consequences](https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/kids-facts-direct-and-indirect-consequences)

Table 1. Percentages of Children Ages 6-12 That Played a Sport “Regularly” in 2008 and 2018

Sport	2008	2018	Percentage Point Difference
Soccer (outdoor)	10.4%	7.4%	-3.0
Baseball	16.5%	13.6%	-2.9
Basketball	16.6%	14.1%	-2.5
Flag Football	4.5%	3.3%	-1.2
Tackle Football	3.7%	2.8%	-0.9
Wrestling	1.1%	0.7%	-0.4
Golf	5.0%	4.9%	-0.1
Volleyball (Court)	2.9%	2.8%	-0.1
Track and Field	1.0%	1.0%	0.0
Softball (Fast-Pitch)	1.0%	1.2%	0.2
Ice Hockey	0.5%	1.1%	0.6
Lacrosse	0.4%	1.0%	0.6
Gymnastics	2.3%	3.4%	1.1

Source: 2019 State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports, The Aspen Institute, Project Play, 2019.

2. Trends in the Provision of Youth Sports in the United States

The structure of youth sports has transitioned over time from recreational leagues that rely on parent volunteers to one based more heavily on private leagues and professional training. As a result, higher income families are spending more time and money on sports, while sports opportunities for children from low-income families are disappearing.⁸

Growth of the Private Youth Sports Sector. The private youth sports sector grew by 55% between 2010 and 2017, with a net worth of \$15.3 billion.⁹ Many private sports leagues charge expensive membership fees and are tryout-based. They attract families that are able to pay for elite training, equipment, and facilities, as well as who have the time and resources to travel large distances to play travel games. Many families believe that success in youth sports can be converted into advantages in college prospects and athletic scholarships. Low-income families are often unable to pay membership fees or cover additional costs of participation. Wealthy households are able to spend more of their income on private leagues, travel, and training, while taking their children out of less prestigious community leagues.

Table 2 displays annual costs for one child to participate by sport, including registration, equipment, travel, lessons and camps. On average, families paid \$693 annually for a child to participate in sports, but wide variation among sports exists. Of note, sports that have seen participation increases in recent years (ice hockey, gymnastics and lacrosse) are also associated with the highest costs. The largest category of spending was travel.

⁸ “Sports Participation and Physical Activity Rates,” The Atlantic, Accessed 7/24/2019

<https://www.aspenprojectplay.org/kids-sports-participation-rates>

⁹ Linda Flanagan, "What's Lost When Only Rich Kids Play Sports," *The Atlantic*, September, 28, 2017

<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2017/09/whats-lost-when-only-rich-kids-play-sports/541317/>

Table 2. Annual Costs for One Child to Participate in a Sport

Sport	Total	Registration	Equipment	Travel	Lessons	Camps
Ice Hockey	\$2,583	\$634	\$389	\$829	\$389	\$302
Gymnastics	\$1,580	\$152	\$111	\$763	\$422	\$104
Lacrosse	\$1,289	\$411	\$280	\$281	\$68	\$231
Golf	\$925	\$81	\$364	\$238	\$88	\$113
Swimming	\$786	\$116	\$59	\$388	\$154	\$68
Baseball	\$660	\$166	\$121	\$175	\$106	\$100
Softball	\$613	\$141	\$159	\$187	\$66	\$53
Volleyball	\$595	\$242	\$66	\$170	\$53	\$54
Soccer	\$537	\$158	\$125	\$107	\$66	\$73
Tackle Football	\$485	\$91	\$110	\$83	\$116	\$76
Wrestling	\$476	\$102	\$59	\$172	\$62	\$54
Basketball	\$427	\$86	\$74	\$114	\$61	\$88
Cross Country	\$421	\$130	\$87	\$147	\$22	\$31
Flag Football	\$268	\$74	\$68	\$58	\$27	\$36
Track & Field	\$191	\$51	\$47	\$49	\$20	\$14
Average	\$693	\$125	\$144	\$196	\$134	\$81

Source: 2019 State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports, The Aspen Institute, Project Play, 2019.

Safety concerns and burnout. Many children that do play sports regularly are now playing in competitive travel teams starting as early as age 6. Teams may operate for multiple seasons during the year, rather than just one season, leading children to specialize in one sport instead of playing multiple sports. This environment places children at risk for injuries and burnout and contributes to children quitting sports at young ages.¹⁰ A 2019 Aspen Institute/Utah State University survey found that on average, children quit a sport at age 11.¹¹

C. Recommended Practices for Increasing Participation

In response to the trends described above, the Aspen Institute launched Project Play in 2013 to produce and disseminate research and tools aimed at increasing access to sports. In 2015, Project Play released *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*, a document that provides a framework for increasing sport participation among children under age 12 through eight “plays”, summarized in the table on the following page.

¹⁰ *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*. The Aspen Institute, Project Play, 2015, < https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2015/01/Aspen-Institute-Project-Play-Report.pdf?_ga=2.229307679.203907004.1575494379-244053328.1575494379 > accessed 12/6/2019

¹¹ 2019 State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports, The Aspen Institut, Project Play, 2019, < https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2019/10/2019_SOP_National_Final.pdf > accessed 12/6/2019

Table 3. Summary of the Aspen Institute Project Play “Playbook” for Children under 12

Play	Why	How
<i>Ask kids what they want</i>	Children will not play if sports are not fun. Providers must learn what children want so they can offer it.	Conduct surveys and share survey data with coaches and leadership. Include young athletes in sports boards.
<i>Reintroduce free play</i>	Free play (e.g. pick-up games) promotes long term participation in sports. However, play today is typically structured and adult-led.	Set aside time at fields and gyms for pickup play, providing equipment and loose supervision.
<i>Encourage sport sampling</i>	Children who play multiple sports perform better, are more likely to play sports long-term, and experience less burnout and social isolation. However, competitive travel teams often encourage players to focus on only one sport.	Offer programs and pricing models that encourage multisport play for children up to age 12.
<i>Revitalize in-town leagues</i>	Many community-based leagues are struggling or no longer viable because they have lost players to competitive travel leagues. As a result, low-cost locally-based sports opportunities are increasingly limited.	Develop models for community-based leagues that attract and retain players by offering skills development and opportunities for advancement without charging high fees.
<i>Think small</i>	Small spaces for children to be active, such as quarter-sized courts in urban areas, can increase access for underserved communities.	Identify small spaces that can be used for sports, close streets occasionally for cycling and other sports, and make sports facilities in public schools available for community sports.
<i>Design for development</i>	Children benefit the most when sports programming is developmentally appropriate for their age group.	Ensure sports programming is consistent with the American Development Model, a framework adopted by the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee that establishes guidelines for age-appropriate activities.
<i>Train all coaches</i>	The quality of coaching impacts how much exercise players get, children's anxiety and self-esteem and attrition from sports. However, the vast majority of youth coaches have not received training in either sports skills or motivational technique.	Take advantage of online coach training tools. Offer coaching clinics for women and recruit mothers as coaches. Train high school and college athletes in coaching.
<i>Emphasize prevention</i>	Parents are increasingly concerned with concussions and other sports-related injuries, which can have lasting effects on children's developing bodies and brains.	Establish policies to reduce or eliminate head contact in sports for children aged 12 and under. Provide alternatives to sports associated with high injury rates and train coaches on safety topics.

Source: *Sport for All, Play for Life: A Playbook to Get Every Kid in the Game*. The Aspen Institute, Project Play, 2015, < https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2015/01/Aspen-Institute-Project-Play-Report.pdf?_ga=2.229307679.203907004.1575494379-244053328.1575494379 > accessed 12/6/2019

Chapter 2. The Youth Sports Landscape in Montgomery County

A variety of government, nonprofit and for-profit organizations provide youth sports programming and maintain and manage sports facilities in Montgomery County. This chapter examines the youth sports landscape in Montgomery County, including the roles and responsibilities of the relevant government agencies and the provision of youth sports by private nonprofit and for-profit organizations.

This report is focused on recreational and competitive sports leagues and clubs. Instructional sports classes, summer sports camps, and interscholastic athletics are described, but are not the focus of this report. Intramural sports and physical education in the public and private schools is outside the scope of this report.

A. Public Provision and Facilitation of Youth Sports for County Residents

Montgomery County Government, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS), the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) Department of Parks, and the Montgomery County Revenue Authority are all involved in the provision and facilitation of sports programming for school-age children and youth. This section summarizes the scope of each agency's work with respect to youth sports.

1. Montgomery County Government

Montgomery County Government provides youth sports programming and facilitates programming offered by private nonprofit and for-profit organizations in two ways:

- a) The Montgomery County Recreation Department (MCRD) operates recreational sports leagues, summer sports camps, and instructional sports classes for children and adolescents.
- b) The Office of Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) reviews all requests from sports leagues, clubs and other organizations to use athletic facilities in public schools, public parks and other publicly-owned facilities and issues permits to use them.

Recreation Department (MCRD). The Recreation Department provides recreational programs, services and facilities in the County for persons of all ages. The Department offers both tax-supported programs as well as non-tax supported programs that are funded entirely through participant fees. The table on the following page summarizes the Recreation Department's youth sports programming. This table includes Recreation Department programs that are specifically sport-focused; the table excludes after-school programs, such as the Excel Beyond the Bell and RecXtra, that incorporate sports as part of a larger program of activities.

Table 4. Recreation Department Sports Programs

Program	Description	Age Groups Served	Participant Fees	FY19 Registrations
Recreational and competitive sports leagues/clubs				
Basketball Leagues	Recreational leagues for players in Kindergarten through 12 th grade, and a competitive league for players in grades 5-8. Leagues operate in winter only.	5-18	Yes	8,345
Ultimate Frisbee Leagues	Coed leagues open to players of all experience levels.	6-18	Yes	248
Miracle League	Softball league for players with disabilities. (Separately, a nonprofit organization operates the Miracle League for younger children.)	15+	Yes	14
Rockville Montgomery Swim Club	Nationally-competitive swim team that trains at 5 sites across the County. Operated in partnership with the City of Rockville.	5+	Yes	2,540
Montgomery County Swim League	Competitive swim league with daily practices and weekly competition.	5-18	Yes	828
Montgomery Dive Club	Privately-operated diving club that partners with MCRD to practice at MCRD facilities.	5+	Yes	799
Winter Futsal	Winter indoor soccer tournament at County Community Recreation Centers.	High School	Yes	255
Soccer4Change	A partnership with Identity, Inc., HHS's Street Outreach Network and the City of Gaithersburg to serve high school youth that face barriers to participation.	High School	No	471
Summer and instructional				
Summer sports camps	Sports-focused summer camps including basketball, cheer, flag football, lacrosse, soccer, volleyball, ultimate frisbee and multisport camps.	2-18	Yes	875
Instructional sports classes	Weekly instructional classes in a wide variety of sports for all ages that typically run for six to twelve weeks.	2-18	Yes	634

Source: MCRD Data

Fees to participate vary by activity and age group. Below are examples of 2019-2020 fees for one child to participate in MCRD's recreational and competitive sports leagues and clubs:

- Recreational Winter Basketball League for grades 3-8: \$110 for 8 weeks with one practice and one game each week
- Miracle League: \$38 for 6 sessions
- Ultimate Frisbee Middle School League: \$65 for 6 sessions
- Rockville Montgomery Swim Club, "Junior II" (ages 9-12) group: \$265 registration fee and \$780 program fee for the September-March season

County residents who receive public assistance, such as Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, may apply for financial assistance for Recreation Department activity and membership fees through the RecAssist program. RecAssist covers 80% of fees for qualifying residents.

Basketball Leagues. As shown in the table on page 11, the Recreation Department’s youth basketball leagues have the most participants among all Recreation Department youth sports programs, with over 8,000 youth registrations in FY19. The table below displays data on youth basketball league participation by age and gender from FY17 to FY19. The data show that:

- Participation increased over the three year period, from just under 7,500 participants in FY17 to over 8,300 participants in FY19, with the largest increase (43%) occurring in the 11-13 age group; and
- Male participants accounted for about two thirds of participants in FY19, and the disparity between female and male participation was largest for the older age groups.

Table 5. Recreation Department Basketball League Participant Registrations, FY17-FY19

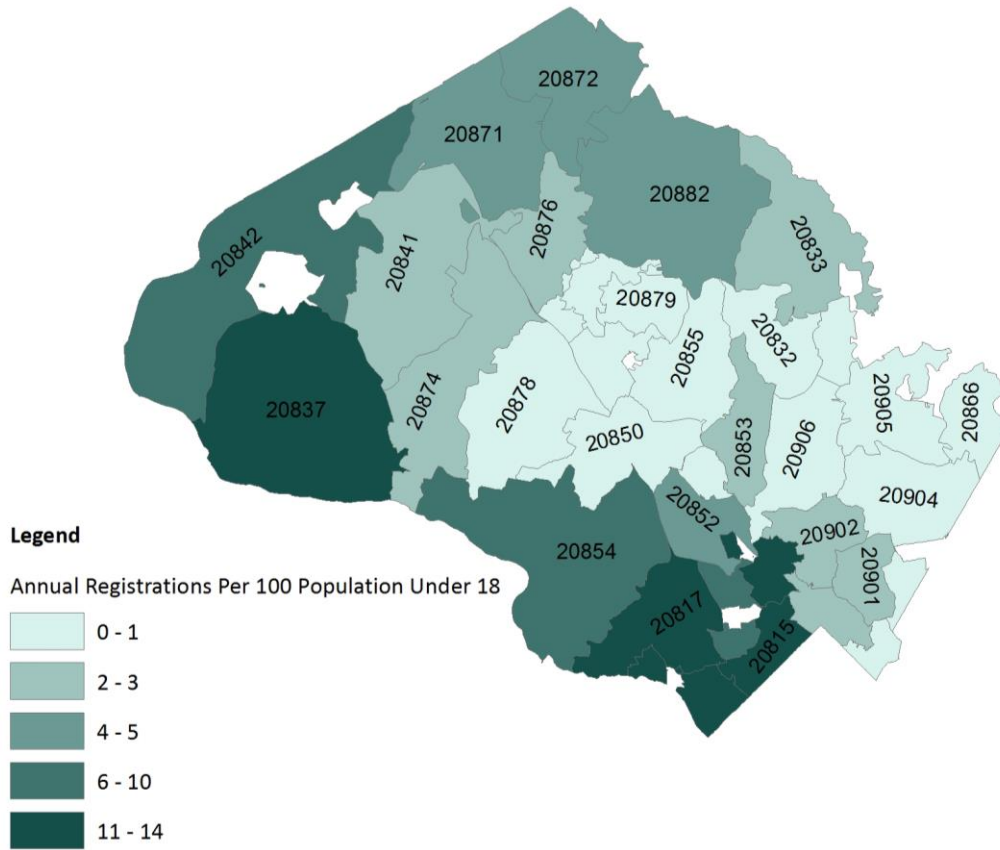
Age and Gender	2017	2018	2019	% Increase FY17-19
Under 6	192	214	142	-26%
Female	35	76	48	37%
Male	157	138	94	-40%
Ages 6-10	3,844	3,412	3,569	-7%
Female	1,545	1,367	1,408	-9%
Male	2,299	2,045	2,161	-6%
Ages 11-13	2,015	2,195	2,878	43%
Female	759	759	901	19%
Male	1,256	1,436	1,977	57%
Ages 14-18	1,439	1,760	1,756	22%
Female	372	363	328	-12%
Male	1,067	1,397	1,428	34%
Total	7,490	7,581	8,345	11%

Source: OLO analysis of MCRD data

The Recreation Department’s dataset included information on the number of participant registrations that included a request for accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Over the three-year period FY17-19, 71 out of 23,756 (0.3%) of participant registrations for basketball leagues included requests for ADA accommodations. Recreation Department staff note that children with disabilities may participate without requesting accommodations.

The map on the following page shows participant registrations by ZIP code of the participant, per 100 population under the age of 18 in the ZIP code (also see Appendix A). The map shows significant disparities in participation rates in Recreation Department basketball leagues by geographical location. Youth in southwestern (Bethesda and Potomac) and western (Poolesville and Dickerson) Montgomery County participated in MCRD basketball leagues at the highest rates while youth in the central and eastern sections of the County participated at the lowest rates.

Exhibit 1. FY17-FY19 Recreation Department Youth Basketball League Registrations Per 100 Child Population



The Office of Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF). CUPF issues permits to use publicly-owned facilities in Montgomery County, including permits for sports leagues and clubs to use athletic facilities. Athletic facilities are available at MCPS elementary, middle and high Schools, MCRD Community Recreation Centers (athletic fields only)¹, and M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks. ActiveMontgomery is the online booking system used by CUPF to manage facility permit requests. CUPF’s facility management policies and permit fees vary by who owns the facility and who is requesting the permit:

- For MCPS and County-owned facilities, CUPF’s management policies and permit fees are set by the Interagency Coordinating Board for Community Use of Public Facilities (ICB), a 12-member board with representatives designated by MCPS, the Board of Education, the County Executive, the County Council, and M-NCPPC. Fees are approved by OMB and the County Council.
- The Montgomery County Planning Board approves the Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Use Policy and sets permit fees for M-NCPPC-owned facilities and fields located in Montgomery County.

FY20 permit fees ranged from \$5 per hour for MCPS and MCRD grass fields to \$145 per hour for nonprofits and County residents to use a lighted M-NCPPC synthetic turf field (or \$215 per hour for commercial organizations and non-County residents). Appendix B provides a complete list of permit fees for athletic facilities available through CUPF.

¹ Other MCRD facilities, such as gymnasiums in Community Recreation Centers, must be booked directly with MCRD

Athletic facilities available for booking from CUPF (MCPS, County Government and M-NCPPC-owned athletic facilities) are subject to historical use policies adopted by the ICB and the Planning Board. Under these policies, sports leagues and sports clubs that have booked an athletic facility in the past have priority for booking the same facility during the same time period in the future. The ICB currently defines a “sports league” as a group of teams that compete against one another in a schedule of games on a seasonal basis rather than year-round. A “sports club” is an organization that operates year-round, hosts or organizes competitive events, and is affiliated with a national or local sports association. Single teams are not eligible for historical use priority under ICB policy. Currently, sports leagues and clubs seeking priority permitting must document that:

- The majority of participants are County residents; and
- The program includes games or tournaments and is not solely an instructional program.²

CUPF administers the Facility Fee Assistance Program (FFAP) to alleviate the cost of MCPS and County facility permits for non-profit organizations and local informal charitable community groups that serve vulnerable youth and low-income individuals. Permits for MCPS and MCRD athletic fields are eligible for the FFAP.

2. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Interscholastic Athletics Program

MCPS’s interscholastic athletics program serves MCPS students in 40 middle schools and 25 high schools. Approximately 5,000 rostered students participate at the middle school level and 22,000 rostered students participate at the high school level. In previous years, MCPS charged a fee for students participating in extracurricular activities, including interscholastic sports. As of the 2018-2019 school year, MCPS eliminated the extracurricular activity fee.

Table 6. MCPS Interscholastic Athletics Program

	Fall	Winter	Spring
Middle School (7th & 8th grade only)			
Boys	Softball	Basketball	Soccer
Girls	Softball	Basketball	Soccer
Coed	Cross Country		
High School			
Boys	Cross Country Football Soccer	Basketball Indoor Track & Field Swimming & Diving Wrestling	Baseball Lacrosse Outdoor Track & Field Tennis Volleyball
Girls	Cross Country Field Hockey Soccer Volleyball	Basketball Indoor Track & Field Swimming & Diving Wrestling	Gymnastics Lacrosse Outdoor Track & Field Softball Tennis
Coed	Cheerleading Golf Pompons	Cheerleading Pompons	Volleyball
Corollary (Coed)	Team Handball	Bocce	Allied Softball

² “Priority VI Use: High-Volume (Weekly Weekend Cultural/Faith-Based Use, Sports Leagues/Clubs, Summer Camps, Large Events,” CUPF Core Services Resource Manual, Revised June 4, 2018, and interviews with CUPF and M-NCPPC Staff.

MCPS provided OLO with data on athletic participation by sport for high school sports, excluding cheerleading and pompons, as shown in Table 7. More detailed data broken down by gender and IEP/504 plan status are available in Appendix C. These data show that in FY19, 20,147 rostered student-athletes participated across all sports (excluding cheerleading and pompons). Of these, 11,239 (56%) were boys and 8,908 (44%) were girls. Students that had Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans, which are provided for children eligible for special education or otherwise receive accommodations for a disability, accounted for 2,437 (12%) rostered student-athletes in FY19. Overall participation in these sports declined slightly since FY15, when 20,483 rostered student-athletes participated.

Table 7. MCPS High School Interscholastic Athletics Program Student Athlete Participation By Sport

Sport	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Baseball	748	772	771	707	752
Basketball	1,310	1,324	1,352	1,333	1,283
Bocce (Corollary)	219	237	228	240	235
Cross Country	1,407	1,403	1,348	1,353	1,408
Field Hockey	852	846	837	845	864
Football	2,087	1,997	1,953	1,919	1,875
Golf	229	236	232	231	238
Gymnastics	138	131	145	119	136
Lacrosse	2,104	2,174	2,219	1,964	2,113
Soccer	1,996	2,035	2,059	1,969	2,062
Softball	688	683	675	645	679
Softball (Corollary)	248	250	260	173	224
Swimming & Diving	1,342	1,435	1,487	1,507	1,466
Team Handball (Corollary)	222	231	209	159	152
Tennis	774	796	776	687	740
Track & Field (Indoor)	1,721	1,816	1,914	1,726	1,553
Track & Field (Outdoor)	2,301	2,551	2,447	2,165	2,276
Volleyball	1,358	1,356	1,392	1,364	1,341
Wrestling	739	769	783	812	750
Total	20,483	21,042	21,087	19,918	20,147

Source: MCPS

Corollary sports. In 2008, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Fitness and Athletics Equity Act. This law requires that the State Board of Education and each county Board of Education ensure access to physical education and athletic programs for students with disabilities. Specifically, the law requires that: (1) students with disabilities have opportunities to participate in mainstream physical education and athletic programs and (2) each county’s Board of Education provide and adequately fund “adapted, allied, or unified physical education and athletic programs.”³

MCPS implemented its corollary sports program at all 25 MCPS high schools during the 2011-2012 school year. Corollary sports form part of MCPS’s interscholastic sports program and provide opportunities for students with

³ MD Code, Education, § 7-4B-02

and without disabilities to play and compete together. Currently, the high school program includes three sports: team handball in the fall, bocce in the winter, and allied softball in the spring.

Eligibility to participate in interscholastic sports. To participate in interscholastic sports, middle and high school students must meet academic eligibility requirements. Specifically, students must maintain a 2.0 grade point average and have no more than one failing grade during the previous marking period.⁴ At the time of writing, this policy was under review by the Board of Education.

Additional sports programming. Additional sports programming available for MCPS students includes:

- Physical education (PE) classes, which are part of the elementary, middle and high school curricula; and
- Intramural sports, which are recreational sports played among students from the same school and are most robust at the middle school level.

3. Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Department of Parks (“Montgomery Parks”)

The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) is a bi-county agency chartered under State law. M-NCPPC is comprised of the Montgomery County Planning Board and the Prince George’s County Planning Board. The Montgomery County Planning Board oversees the Montgomery County Department of Planning and the Montgomery County Department of Parks (“Montgomery Parks”). Most of the parkland and park facilities in Montgomery County are owned by M-NCPPC or, where the park land is owned by Montgomery County, managed by M-NCPPC through a longstanding legal agreement.⁵ Montgomery Parks manages and maintains a system of 422 parks and athletic facilities including:

- 342 athletic fields;
- 225 basketball courts ;
- 324 tennis courts (outdoor and indoor);
- 24 volleyball courts;
- Seven cricket fields;
- Four golf courses;
- Two ice rinks; and
- 251 miles of paved and natural surface trails.

As noted on page 13, individuals and organizations (including sports leagues and clubs) can apply to CUPF for permits to use most Montgomery Parks athletic facilities.⁶ The Montgomery County Planning Board sets policies regarding the use of athletic facilities at parks in Montgomery County.⁷ Montgomery Parks also offers fee-based instructional sports programming at its facilities for children and adolescents including:

- Archery;
- Figure skating;

⁴ Board of Education of Montgomery County Policy IQD, last revised May 10, 2011

⁵ “FAQ: How are Montgomery Parks organized? What is the relationship between Parks, the Maryland National Capital Parks and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), and Montgomery County government?”; Retrieved from <https://www.montgomeryparksfoundation.org/about-us-2/faq/>

⁶ M-NCPPC ice rinks are not available

⁷ “M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks Athletic Field Use Permit Policy”, M-NCPPC, Adopted 2-21-13

- Golf;
- Ice skating;
- Ice hockey; and
- Tennis

4. Montgomery County Revenue Authority MCG Juniors Golf League

The Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA) is a public corporation established in 1957. MCRA operates self-supporting facilities (including nine golf courses) in the County. MCRA also provides bond financing for construction of public facilities. Through its MCG Golf Academy, MCRA provides a variety of fee-based instructional golf programming for youth and adults at its facilities and operates the MCG Juniors Golf League. The golf league serves youth in three age groups: 7-9, 10-13, and 14-17. For fall of 2019, the fee to participate in the golf league was \$139 for one practice and four matches. MCRA also partners with The First Tee of Greater Washington, DC which provides youth development and instructional golf programming to youth ages 7-18.

Youth Sports Offered By Municipalities

Municipalities also provide youth sports in Montgomery County. The following summarizes youth sports programs provided by the Cities of Gaithersburg, Rockville and Takoma Park.

City of Gaithersburg. The Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture operates sports leagues for youth and teens in the fall, winter and spring. Offerings include baseball, basketball, cross country, flag football, soccer, softball, T-ball, track & field, and volleyball. For the Spring of 2020, participant fees for Gaithersburg residents ranged from \$52 to \$57 for the season.

City of Rockville. The Department of Recreation and Parks' youth sports leagues include soccer, cross country and football in the fall, basketball in the winter, and T-ball, baseball, track & field, and soccer in the spring. The sports leagues serve children in Pre-K through grade 12. Participant fees vary by sport and range from \$60 to \$89 for Rockville residents in 2019-2020. In FY17, 6,286 participants were served by the city's youth sports leagues.⁸

City of Takoma Park. The Recreation Department offers basketball (summer and winter), futsal (winter), and T-ball (summer) leagues for youth. Participant fees for Takoma Park residents range from \$35 to \$70 for kindergarten through high school-aged children and youth. In FY18, winter basketball was the largest youth sports league with 673 participants. Summer basketball had 112 participants, futsal had 80 participants and T-ball had 70 participants.⁹

⁸ City of Rockville, Maryland Fiscal Year 2019 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program, p.246

⁹ City of Takoma Park Fiscal Year 2020 Adopted Budget, p. 172.

B. Youth Sports Offered by Private and Nonprofit Organizations

The Office of Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF) maintains a list of sports leagues and sports clubs in Montgomery County that have been granted historical use priority for booking athletic fields, courts and other facilities. This section analyzes CUPF data on bookings by these sports leagues and clubs of athletic facilities owned by County Government, MCPS and M-NCPPC . Of note, the data presented in this section are not reflective of all private or nonprofit sports activity in the County. It excludes the following activities and organizations:

- Sports leagues and clubs that have not requested historical use priority to book athletic facilities from CUPF;
- “Pick-up” and other sports play that occurs by groups without booking the facility with CUPF;
- Sports activity on facilities not available for booking through CUPF, such as: M-NCPPC trails; MCRD gyms and swimming pools; privately-owned facilities like the SoccerPlex, private clubs, private schools; facilities owned by municipalities; and
- Private schools with sports teams open only to their students.

Additionally, stakeholders reported to OLO that leagues and clubs often book facilities with CUPF (and pay the associated booking fees) but do not use them. Leagues and clubs book facilities that they do not use to avoid losing priority for those facilities in the future – historical use priority applies only to facilities the organization used in the previous year. Therefore, the data presented in this section may overestimate activity by some organizations.

1. Youth Sports Leagues and Clubs in Montgomery County

Table 8 presents data on sports leagues and clubs that have requested and been granted historical use priority to book athletic facilities through CUPF and made bookings in FY19. As noted on page 14, the ICB defines a “sports league” as a group of teams that compete against one another in a schedule of games on a seasonal basis rather than year-round. A “sports club” is an organization that operates year-round, hosts or organizes competitive events, and is affiliated with a national or local sports association.

For its analysis, OLO excluded: (1) sports leagues and clubs that serve only adults; (2) private schools with sports teams restricted to their students; and (3) public schools and municipalities. Based on these criteria, OLO identified 89 youth sports leagues and clubs that booked athletic facilities in FY19 with historical use priority. In FY19, these 89 organizations accounted for 34% (44,873 out of 131,797 total) bookings of athletic facilities by all organizations in that year.

Table 8. Youth Sports Leagues and Clubs Who Booked with CUPF in FY19 Using Historical Use Priority

Sport	# of Youth Leagues/Clubs	By Age Groups Served*			# of Bookings **
		Elementary	Middle	High	
Soccer	40	37	35	25	26,957
Baseball	32	26	30	20	24,348
Basketball	18	18	18	10	15,894
Football	18	17	17	8	12,766
Softball	13	12	11	5	9,316
Lacrosse	15	11	13	7	6,413
Other sports	7	4	6	5	649
Total**	89	72	77	50	44,873

Source: OLO Analysis of CUPF Data

* A league or club was considered to serve a given age group if it served any youth in that age group. OLO could not determine how many youth from each age group were served by each league/club.

** For organizations that offer more than one sport, OLO could not determine which bookings were associated with each sport. Bookings by sport include all bookings by any organization that offers the sport.

*** Adding together numbers of leagues/clubs and bookings for each sport exceed totals because several organizations offer more than one sport.

OLO used internet searches to determine sports offered and ages served by each league or club. Some clubs offer more than one sport. OLO could not determine how many youth from each age group were served. These data show that among youth leagues and clubs who booked a facility with historical use priority:

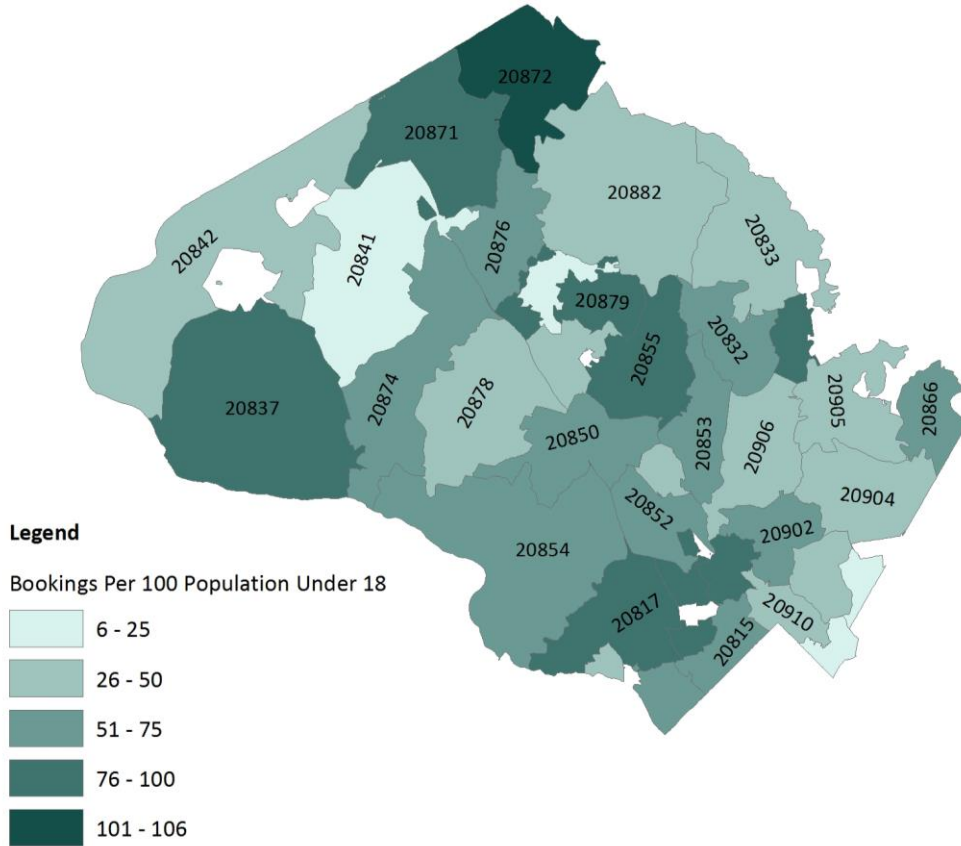
- Soccer was the most common sport offered, followed closely by baseball;
- More leagues and clubs served elementary and middle school-aged children than high school-aged youth; and
- A small number of sports leagues and clubs accounted for a large number of bookings: 12 out of 89 (13%) leagues and clubs each made more than 1,000 bookings in FY19, accounting for 28,558 out of 44,873 bookings (64%) of bookings by youth sports leagues and clubs with historical use priority.

2. Location of Bookings

OLO also examined bookings by youth sports leagues and clubs by ZIP code. The map below displays numbers of bookings per 100 population under the age of 18 in each ZIP code. A full list of bookings by ZIP code is available in Appendix D. The map shows that the numbers of bookings, adjusted for population, vary widely between ZIP codes. Of note, these data reflect the locations where sports activity occurs, and not the locations where participants reside. Variation in bookings by ZIP code may be due to several factors including:

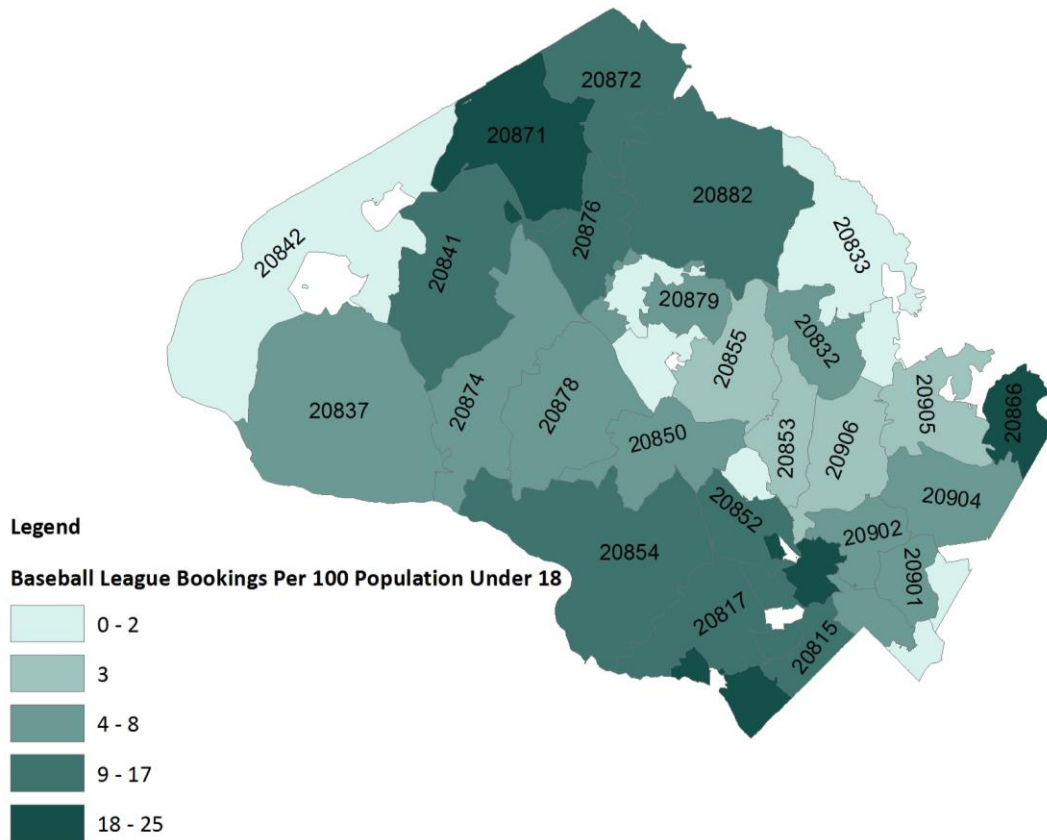
- ZIP codes with more athletic facilities, such as ZIP codes with M-NCPPC-managed parks (e.g. Cabin John Regional Park in 20817 and Wheaton Regional Park in 20902) are likely to show more sports activity than ZIP codes with fewer athletic facilities;
- In some ZIP codes sports activity occurs in facilities that are not managed by CUPF, such as parks and athletic facilities owned by municipalities and private entities, and this map does not reflect this activity;
- Some youth sport leagues and clubs may be more likely to operate in high-income ZIP codes where families can afford to pay high fees, such as those in the southwestern part of the County.

Exhibit 2. FY19 Youth Sports League/Club CUPF Bookings Per 100 Population Under Age 18



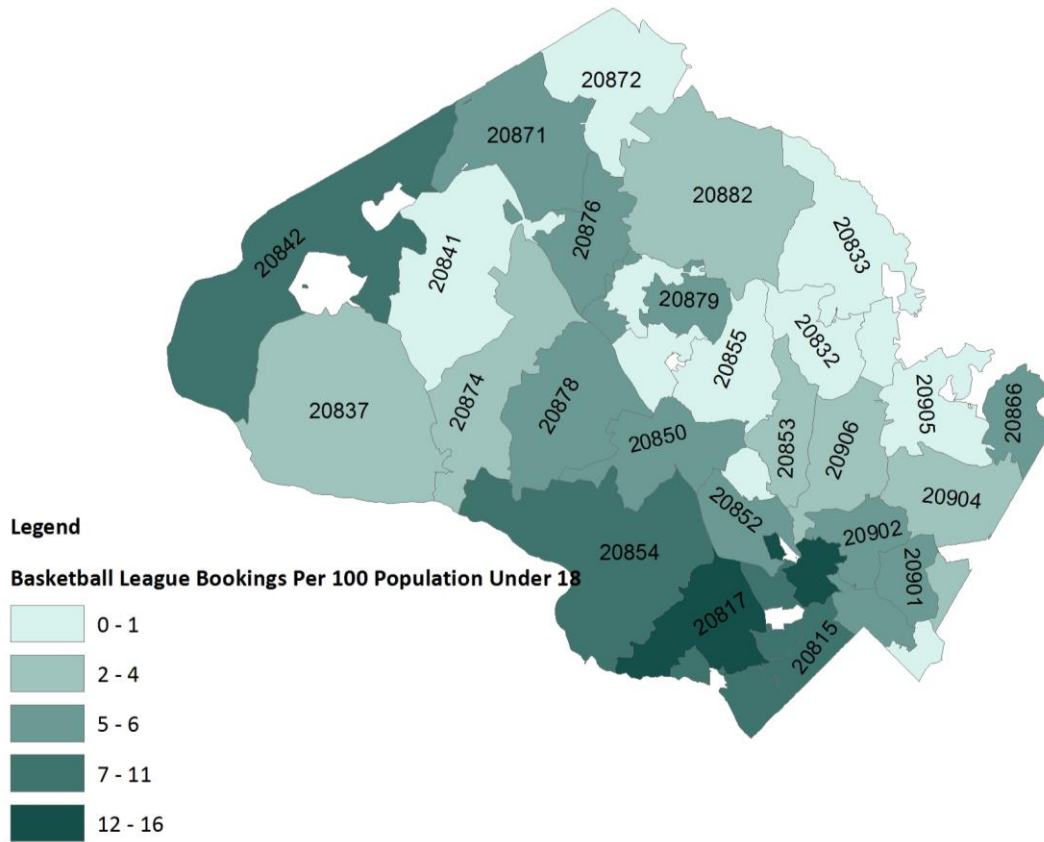
This map shows that the 20872 ZIP code (Damascus) had the most bookings per 100 population under 18 in FY19. Other ZIP codes with large numbers of bookings, adjusted for youth population, were 20879 (Gaithersburg and Montgomery Village), 20817 (Bethesda), 20837 (Poolesville) and 20855 (Derwood). The following pages display CUPF bookings per 100 population under 18 by sport for baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball and lacrosse.

Exhibit 3. FY19 Baseball League/Club CUPF Bookings Per 100 Population Under Age 18



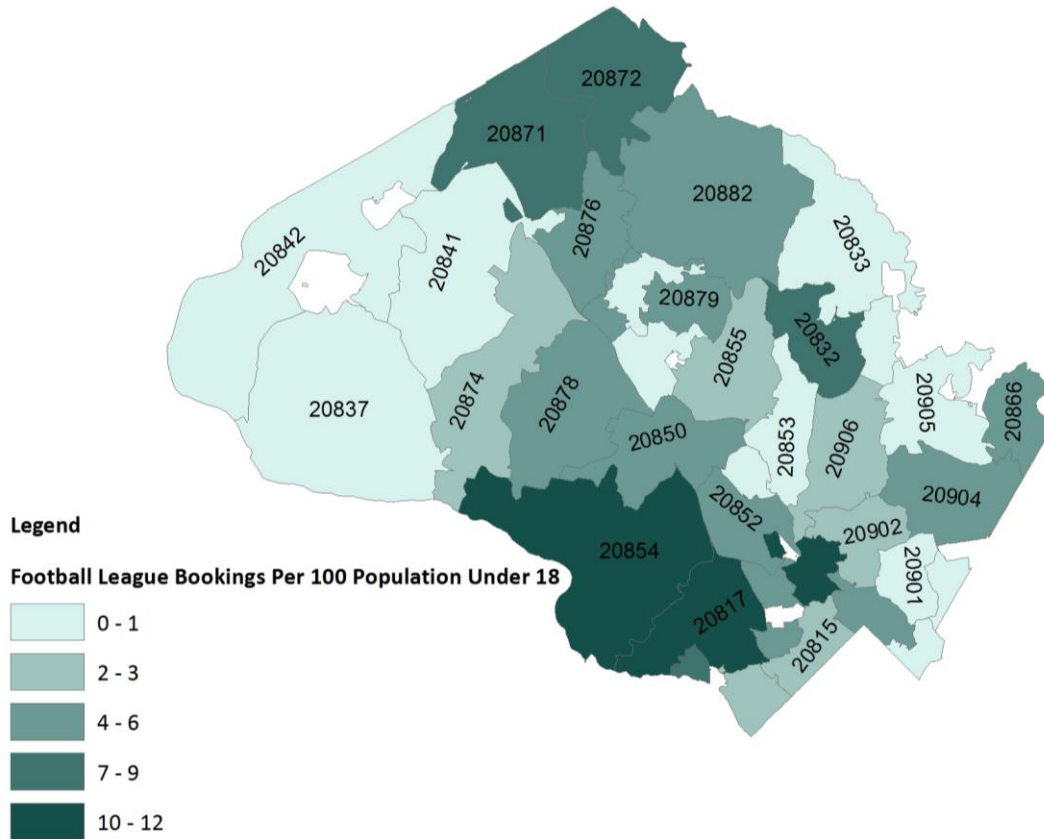
Bookings per 100 population under 18 by leagues and clubs that offer baseball were highest in ZIP codes 20871 (Clarksburg), 20895 (Kensington), and 20818 (Cabin John).

Exhibit 4. FY19 Basketball League/Club CUPF Bookings Per 100 Population Under Age 18



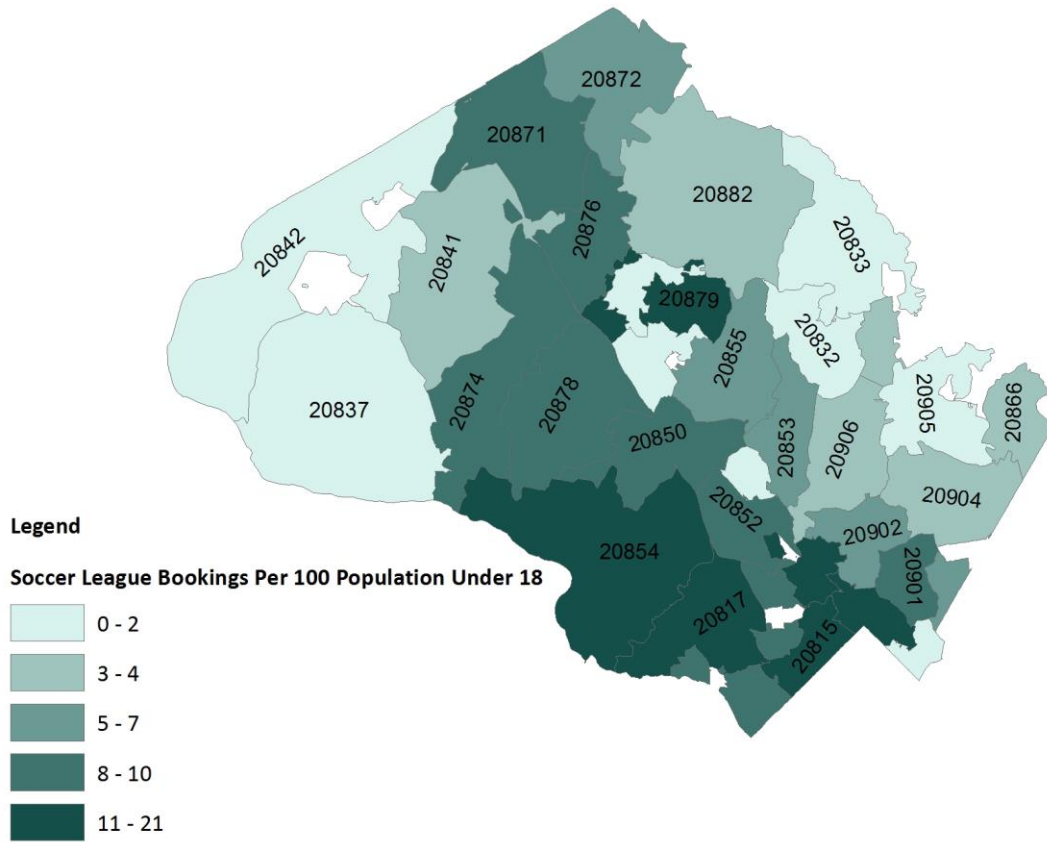
Bookings per 100 population under 18 by leagues and clubs that offer basketball were highest in ZIP codes 20895 (Kensington) and 20817 (Bethesda). The 20854 (Potomac) and 20815 (Chevy Chase) ZIP codes also had large numbers of bookings.

Exhibit 5. FY19 Football League/Club CUPF Bookings Per 100 Population Under Age 18



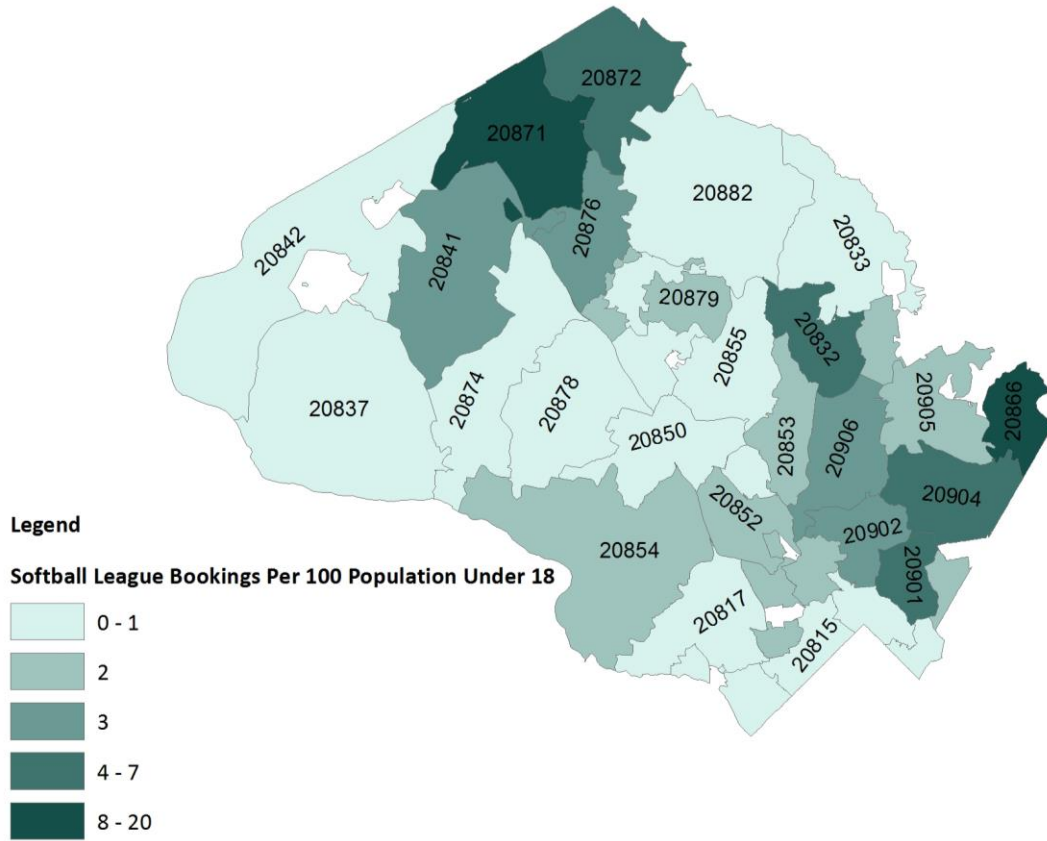
Bookings per 100 population under 18 by leagues and clubs that offer football were highest in ZIP codes 20895 (Kensington), 20854 (Potomac) and 20817 (Bethesda).

Exhibit 6. FY19 Soccer League/Club CUPF Bookings Per 100 Population Under Age 18



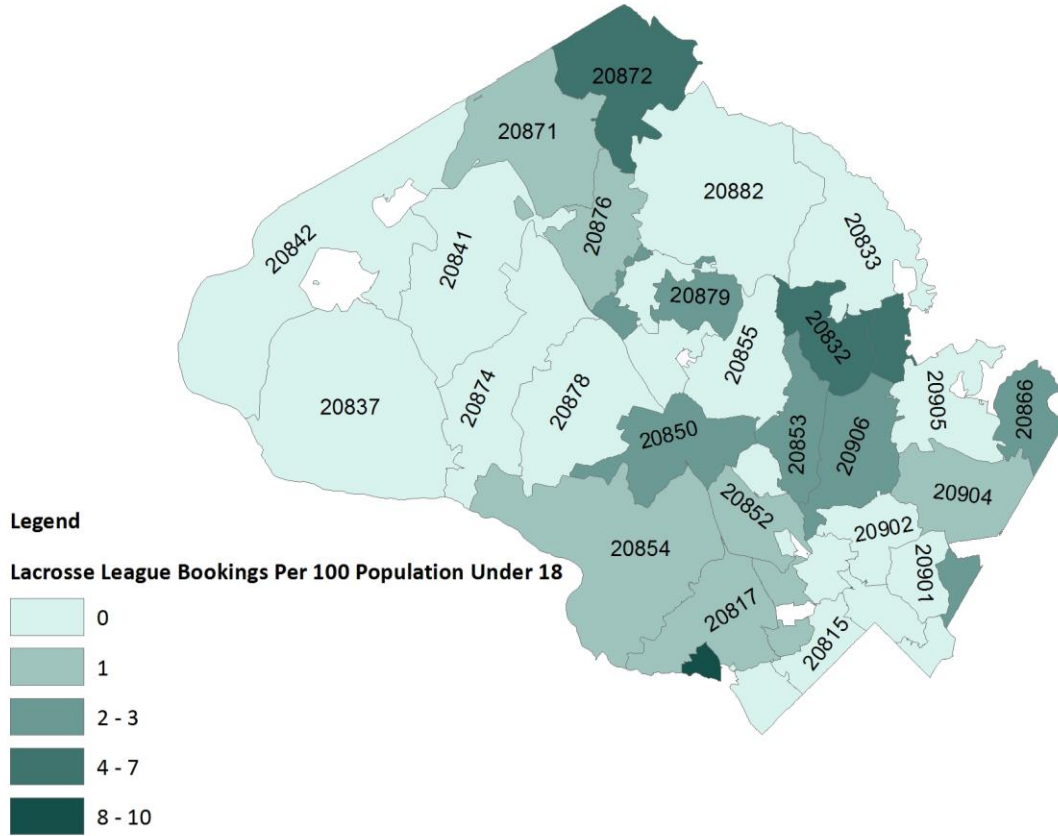
Bookings per 100 population under 18 by leagues and clubs that offer soccer were highest in ZIP codes 20854 (Potomac), 20817 (Bethesda), 20815 (Chevy Chase) and 20895 (Kensington).

Exhibit 7. FY19 Softball League/Club CUPF Bookings Per 100 Population Under Age 18



Bookings per 100 population under 18 by leagues and clubs that offer softball were highest in ZIP codes 20866 (Burtonsville) and 20871 (Clarksburg).

Exhibit 8. FY19 Lacrosse League/Club CUPF Bookings Per 100 Population Under Age 18



Bookings per 100 population under 18 by leagues and clubs that offer lacrosse were highest in ZIP codes 20818 (Cabin John), 20832 (Olney) and 20872 (Damascus).

Chapter 3. Stakeholder Observations on Youth Sports in Montgomery County

Chapter 2 reviews limited data on youth participation in the Department of Recreation’s basketball league as well as data on bookings of public athletic facilities by youth sports leagues. However, comprehensive data on youth sports participation in Montgomery County are not available.

To provide additional context on the youth sports landscape in Montgomery County, this chapter summarizes observations OLO heard from stakeholders through interviews and informal online surveys of youth sports providers and parent-teacher association (PTA) members. In summary, OLO found these observations to indicate that the current provision of youth sports in Montgomery County is not aligned with many families’ needs and that significant disparities in access exist. Moreover, opportunities exist to increase access and better meet the needs of youth and their families.

A. Stakeholder Interviews

During the course of this study, OLO interviewed a variety of stakeholders involved in the provision or facilitation of youth sports in Montgomery County. These include representatives from:

- Montgomery County Government
- M-NCPPC Montgomery Parks,
- MCPS
- The Montgomery County Revenue Authority, and
- Private for-profit and non-profit youth sports providers.

A full list of all persons interviewed is provided on page X of this report. This section presents common themes that OLO heard during its interviews.

Growth of competitive, tryout-based clubs and leagues in Montgomery County. The youth sports landscape in Montgomery County mirrors the national youth sports landscape. Affordable and recreational youth sports in Montgomery County have declined in recent decades. Starting as young as age 6, many children are playing with competitive, tryout-based leagues and clubs that employ paid coaches, charge high participant fees, and demand significant amounts of time and travel from players and their families. While robust recreational leagues and clubs that charge relatively low fees and do not require tryouts are thriving in some parts of the County, many areas lack affordable youth sports programs.

Silos in youth sports and lack of access to information. As shown in Chapter 2, a variety of public and private entities provide and facilitate youth sports in Montgomery County. Several stakeholders noted that the provision of youth sports in Montgomery County is siloed. For example, in other jurisdictions, the same government entity maintains the local parks system and provides public recreation on its own facilities. In Montgomery County, the Montgomery County Government’s Recreation Department (MCRD) provides public recreation programs, and M-NCPPC Department of Parks manages athletic facilities in the parks in Montgomery County (see Chapter 2). Stakeholders expressed concerns that the lack of a unified parks and recreation system in Montgomery County limits the potential for public provision of youth sports in the County.

Stakeholders further stated that a variety of organizations in the community provide affordable youth sports in Montgomery County. However, these organizations do not often collaborate or communicate with one another, and County agencies do not have a coordinated approach for working with these organizations. One

consequence of siloed youth sports is that parents lack information about available sports activities and how to select an appropriate activity for their child.

Barriers to access. Stakeholders reported that disparities in participation in youth sports exist by family income, gender and disability status. Competitive sports clubs and leagues often provide financial support, such as scholarships, to ensure that very talented youth from low-income families can participate. However, registration fees, equipment costs and lack of transportation represent major barriers for most low-income families. Stakeholders report that the disparity in sports participation by family income is apparent at the high school level, where schools that serve low-income students that have had few opportunities to play sports in elementary and middle school are not able to compete against schools that serve high-income populations with greater rates of participation in youth sports.

OLO also heard concerns from stakeholders that disparities in participation by gender and by disability status are most acute among low-income families. For example, stakeholders report that efforts to reach low-income Latinx youth have been successful among boys, but that they have struggled to reach girls in this population.

Stakeholders also note that sports opportunities for children with disabilities are very limited. Many mainstream sports providers are unsure of how to work with children with disabilities. Organizations that offer adaptive sports for children with disabilities do not have resources to reach low-income populations that are not aware of their services and lack access to transportation.

Challenges with recruiting and training coaches. Affordable youth sports programs have historically relied on volunteer coaches to keep participation fees low. However, stakeholders report that recruiting volunteer coaches has become increasingly challenging in recent decades. Parents' long working hours and concerns about liability issues were cited as contributing factors. In communities where many parents work multiple jobs, sports programs cannot rely on volunteers. Stakeholders also noted that some volunteer-coached programs suffer from poor coaching, which can have the unintended effect of discouraging youth from playing sports.

Access to athletic facilities. Numerous stakeholders from public agencies and nonprofit organizations expressed concerns regarding access to booking public athletic facilities, as described below.

Historical use policies. Currently, ICB and Planning Board policies give priority access to athletic facilities to sports leagues and clubs that have used those facilities in the past. CUPF staff report that these policies were put into place to provide leagues and clubs with stability, allowing them to operate from year to year. However, some government and community stakeholders suggested that they undermine efforts to increase youth participation in sports and perpetuate disparities in access.

These stakeholders argued that certain types of programs should be given priority over historical users. These might include Recreation Department programs (they currently have priority in County and MCPS facilities but not in Montgomery Parks facilities), programs that primarily serve children that live in the neighborhood where the facility is located, and programs that reach underserved populations. OLO also heard concerns that the historical use policy incentivizes leagues and clubs to reserve facilities that they will not use, in order to retain priority for those facilities in future years.

Facility costs. Organizations that provide affordable youth sports opportunities typically have limited sources of revenue, and many are volunteer-run. As a result, even modest facility fees such as those charged for MCPS, MCRD and M-NCPPC grass fields (see Appendix B) can be costly for these organizations. Additionally, other types of facilities, such as lighted and turf fields, are cost-prohibitive

for these organizations, limiting their ability to operate in the winter and during bad weather. At the same time, agency staffs note that user fees are needed to fund facility maintenance.

Booking process. Some stakeholders reported technical difficulties using ActiveMontgomery, the online system for reserving facilities through CUPF. Stakeholders also stated that securing space in public schools was challenging and required building relationships with administrators at individual schools. Representatives from nonprofit organizations expressed a desire for increased support for finding space to operate their programs.

Lack of space for free play. Some stakeholders stated that youth who want to play “pick up” sports on an informal basis (e.g. without booking a facility through CUPF) often cannot find spaces to play that have not been reserved by other users.

Approaches to advance community-based youth sports. In interviews, stakeholders identified the following opportunities for County agencies to increase access and participation in affordable, community-based youth sports:

- Convene sports providers from across the County to discuss access and participation in youth sports in order to identify specific strategies, encourage partnerships and reduce silos;
- Organize a sports fair to help parents identify sports programs in their communities that are appropriate for their child;
- Offer free coaching clinics to promote volunteer coaching;
- Bring opportunities to play sports to where children are (e.g. schools) to reduce transportation barriers, possibly working with existing programs such as Linkages to Learning;
- Make youth sports activities family events by providing activities for parents;
- Review policies and processes around community use of public athletic facilities to identify ways to help affordable sports programs develop and grow and to encourage free play.

B. Provider and Parent Surveys

In October of 2019, OLO conducted two anonymous surveys that solicited information from: (1) youth sports providers and (2) parent-teacher association (PTA) members on youth sports in Montgomery County. The survey data are not representative of all youth sports providers or all parents in the County, and the surveys are not intended to produce statistical estimates. Rather, the surveys were designed to provide an additional source of information on the youth sports landscape in Montgomery County.

1. Youth Sports Provider Survey

OLO sent its youth sports provider survey to 145 e-mail addresses of:

- Individuals who reserved public athletic facilities with CUPF during FY19 for sports leagues and clubs that have historical use priority; and
- Representatives from nonprofit organizations who received donations of sports equipment from the nonprofit organization Leveling the Playing Field, Inc.

The survey consisted of 12 optional questions. OLO received 30 responses to the survey, which represents a 21% response rate.

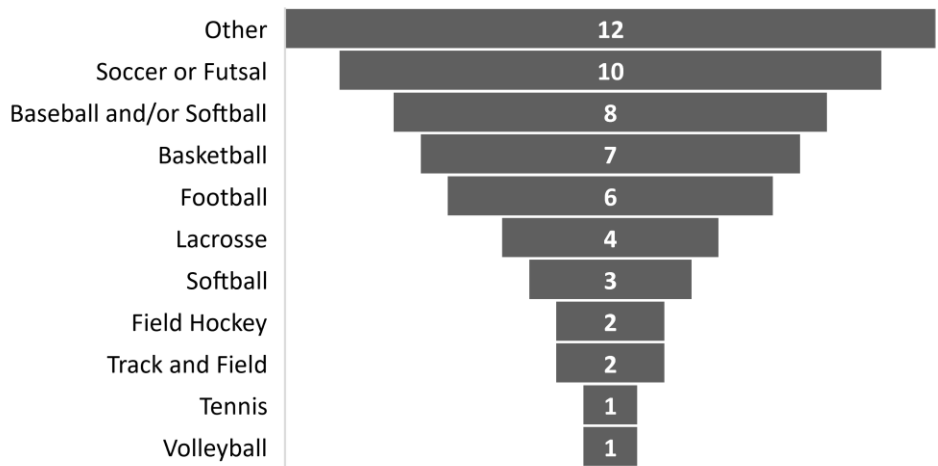
Characteristics of provider survey respondents. Provider survey respondents represented a variety of different types of organizations that offered a wide range of sports and operated in numerous geographical locations across the County. As shown on Table 9, about half of respondents identified as nonprofit organizations, and an additional 11 respondents identified as either a sports club or team, a sports camp or academy or a sports league.

Table 9. Provider Category (29 respondents)

Category	#	%
Non-profit organization	15	52%
Sports club/team	5	17%
Sports camp/academy	4	14%
Sports league	2	7%
For-profit enrichment/extracurricular activity provider	1	3%
Faith-based organization	1	3%
Other	1	3%

Of 29 respondents, 19 reported offering one sport and 10 reported offering multiple sports. Respondents reported offering a wide variety of sports, as shown on Chart 3. The most common sport selected by respondents was soccer (or futsal). The 12 respondents that selected “Other” for sports offered named a variety of sports including rugby, ultimate frisbee, wrestling, cheerleading, and adventure sports (e.g. rock-climbing).

Chart 3. Sports that Respondents' Organizations Offered (28 respondents)*



* Respondents were asked to select all the sports that they offered, so the responses add up to more than the 28 respondents.

In aggregate, respondents estimated serving approximately 30,000 youth, including about 17,800 elementary school-aged children, 7,000 middle school-aged children and 5,000 high school-aged adolescents. While seven respondents reported providing programming across all of Montgomery County, the remaining 23 respondents reported offering programming in the locations listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Places Respondents Reported Offering Programming (30 respondents)

Place	#*	Place	#*
Silver Spring	9	Cloverly	1
Bethesda	5	Damascus	1
Germantown	5	Down County	1
Kensington	5	East County	1
Gaithersburg	3	Galway Park	1
Potomac	3	Garrett Park	1
Rockville	3	Long Branch	1
Up County	4	Mid County	1
Chevy Chase	2	Montgomery Hills	1
Poolesville	2	Montgomery Village	1
Wheaton	2	North Bethesda	1
Burtonsville	1	Olney	1
Calverton	1	White Oak	1
Clarksburg	1		

*Respondents could name more than one place

Respondents reported using a variety of tools to recruit participants, shown on Table 11. Word of mouth was the most commonly used tool, followed by social media and websites.

Table 11. Tools Used by Respondents to Recruit Participants (30 Respondents)

Recruitment tool	#	%*
Word of mouth	29	97%
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	25	83%
Website	22	73%
In-person community outreach	16	53%
Flyers in schools	15	50%
Flyers in other community and public spaces	14	47%
Referrals from other organizations	11	37%
Other	4	13%

*Respondents could select more than one option, so percentages add up to more than 100%

As shown on Table 12, all but one of 28 respondents reported using participant fees as a source of revenue. Private or corporate donations and grants, as well as fundraising activities, were each sources of revenue for over half of respondents.

Table 12. Respondents’ Reported Revenue Sources (28 Respondents)

Revenue Source	#	%
Participant fees	27	96%
Private or corporate donations and grants	16	57%
Fundraising activities	15	54%
Government grants	2	7%
Other	1	4%

*Respondents could select more than one option, so percentages add up to more than 100%

Respondents reported being heavily reliant on volunteers. Over a third of respondents (11) reported that they had no paid staff, and less than half reported employing more than two staff. Only two respondents reported that they did not use volunteers, and nearly a third reported that over 50 volunteers served their programs.

Table 13. Respondents’ Reported Staffing (30 Respondents)

Staffing	#	%
# of Paid staff		
None	11	37%
1 or 2	8	27%
3 or more	11	37%
# of Volunteers		
None	2	7%
1 to 10	9	30%
11 to 30	11	37%
50 or more	8	27%

Provider Survey Respondent Observations on Youth Sports in Montgomery County. OLO’s survey asked providers the following two open-ended questions:

1. What challenges or barriers does your organization face in providing sports opportunities for children and youth?
2. How could the County better work to promote access to sports for all children and youth?

Table 14 summarizes the responses to these two questions.

Table 14. Summary of Respondents' Answers to Open-Ended Provider Survey Questions (30 respondents)

Issue	Description	# of Respondents
Question #1: Challenges and Barriers		
Facilities	Respondents struggle to secure athletic facilities for youth sports, especially fields in the downcounty area, lighted fields, small-sided soccer fields, artificial turf fields, indoor facilities, and rugby fields.	21
Funding/ Revenue	Respondents report difficulties keeping participant fees affordable and offering scholarships while paying for necessary expenses such as facilities and equipment.	15
Recruiting Participants	Some respondents reported that marketing their programs is a challenge, and that they are seeing declining interest in some sports. Trends toward increased specialization mean that children may play one sport year-round, reducing participation in other sports.	4
Transportation	Providing transportation for participants to and from activities is a challenge for some respondents.	3
Recruiting coaches	Respondents struggle to recruit coaches with proper training and background checks, especially as volunteers.	3
Question #2: Ways for the County to promote access to youth sports		
Facilities	Respondents suggested lowering the costs of booking turf fields and indoor facilities for nonprofit groups, adding facilities for sports that lack them, such as rugby, finding new ways to provide lighted fields, giving youth sports organizations and smaller organizations priority for fields, and making the facility booking process more user-friendly.	16
Funding	Respondents expressed a need for more grants to help them provide scholarships and for partnerships between MCRD and nonprofits that serve under-represented youth.	9
Marketing	MCPS and the County Government could help respondents to market their programs by offering more opportunities for respondents to advertise in schools, County Cable Montgomery, and other County media as well as by organizing a sports fair.	8
Transportation	Respondents suggested the County could provide support to nonprofits with transportation, for example through rentals of school buses.	2
Coaches	The County could provide youth sports groups support with training and recruiting volunteer coaches.	2

2. PTA Survey

In October of 2019, OLO circulated a survey to the listserv of the Montgomery County Council of Parent-Teacher Associations to solicit feedback on PTA members’ experiences with youth sports in Montgomery County. OLO received 103 responses to the survey.

Characteristics of PTA survey respondents. Survey respondents were primarily located in southern Montgomery County, and had children across all grades who played a wide variety of sports. Table 15 shows that over half of respondents reside in either Bethesda or Silver Spring.

Table 15. Places Where Respondents Reside (103 respondents)

Place (based on ZIP code)	#	%
Bethesda	29	28%
Silver Spring	29	28%
Chevy Chase	9	9%
Rockville	7	7%
Gaithersburg	6	6%
Burtonsville	4	4%
Derwood	4	4%
Kensington	4	4%
Potomac	3	3%
Germantown	2	2%
Other	5	6%

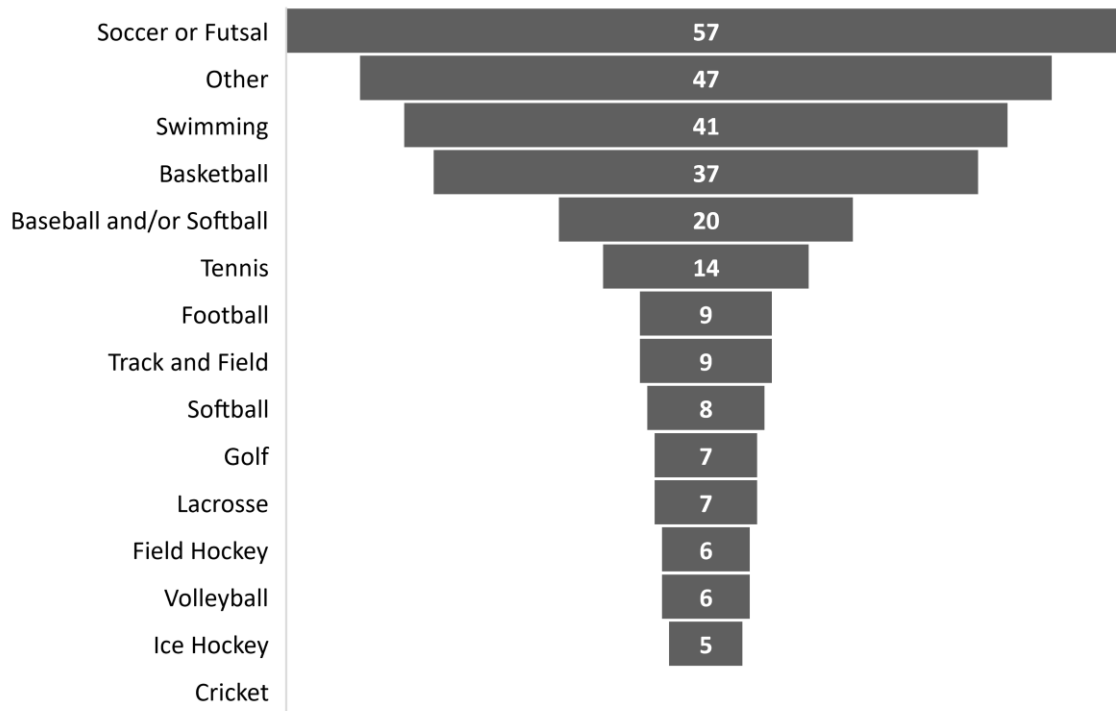
OLO asked respondents to list whether their children were enrolled in elementary, middle or high school. Table 16 lists the aggregate number of children reported by the 103 respondents. Respondents reported somewhat more children in elementary and middle school than in high school.

Table 16. Children of Respondents by Grade Span

Grade span	Total Children
Elementary School	74
Middle School	73
High School	58

Youth Sports Participation. Chart 4 below lists the sports that respondents reported their children play. Soccer or futsal was the most frequently selected sport, followed by swimming and basketball. The 47 respondents that selected “Other” named the following sports: ballet, bowling, crew, cross country, cycling, dance, diving, fencing, figure skating, flag football, gymnastics, jiu-jitsu, parkour, poms, skateboarding, skiing, squash, Taekwondo, wrestling, and yoga.

Chart 4. Sports Played By Respondents' Children in the Past Year (98 Respondents)*



* Respondents could select more than one sport, so the total number of responses for this question exceeds the number of respondents.

OLO's survey also asked respondents which sports (if any) they would like for their children to play that they have not played in the past 12 months. Respondents named a total of 32 different sports. Swimming, tennis and volleyball were the most popular responses. The sports named (with numbers of respondents) are listed below:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Swimming (9) | 12. Fencing (2) | 23. Golf (1) |
| 2. Tennis (8) | 13. Field Hockey (2) | 24. Group Fitness (1) |
| 3. Volleyball (8) | 14. Gymnastics (2) | 25. Gymnastics (1) |
| 4. Soccer (6) | 15. Hockey (2) | 26. Kickball (1) |
| 5. Basketball (5) | 16. Ice Skating (2) | 27. Rowing (1) |
| 6. Cross Country/Track (6) | 17. Ping Pong (2) | 28. Sailing (1) |
| 7. Lacrosse (5) | 18. Table Tennis (2) | 29. Squash (1) |
| 8. Badminton (3) | 19. Adaptive Recreation (1) | 30. Street Hockey (1) |
| 9. Martial Arts (3) | 20. Archery (1) | 31. Tai-chi (1) |
| 10. Softball (3) | 21. Cricket (1) | 32. Trampoline (1) |
| 11. Baseball (2) | 22. Flag football (1) | |

Youth Sports Information, Transportation and Costs. Word of mouth was the most common source of information for respondents on sports opportunities for their children, followed by flyers in schools, websites and social media.

Table 17. How Respondents Learned About Sports Opportunities for Their Children (103 respondents)

Source	#	%*
Word of mouth	87	84%
Flyers in schools	50	49%
Website	40	39%
Social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter)	29	28%
Other	22	21%
Flyers in other community and public spaces	21	20%
Referrals from other organizations	18	17%
Community events	13	13%

*Respondents could select more than one option, so percentages add up to more than 100%

The vast majority of respondents reported that cars/carpooling was the primary mode of transportation used by their families to get to sports activities. Two respondents reported using public transit. An additional two respondents selected “Other” and stated that their family traveled to sports activities by bicycle.

Table 18. Primary Mode of Transportation to Sports Used by Respondents’ Families (101 respondents)

Mode of Transportation	#	%
Cars/carpooling	91	90%
Activities are based within child's school	4	4%
Public transit	2	2%
Walking	1	1%
Other	3	3%

OLO’s survey also asked respondents to list the total amount they spend annually for one child to play sports. Reported costs from 87 respondents ranged from \$50 to \$1,200, and the average cost reported was \$1,568. The median cost reported by respondents was \$1,000, meaning that half of respondents reported spending at least \$1,000. Over a third of respondents reported spending at least \$2,000 annually for one child to play sports.

PTA Member Observations on Youth Sports in Montgomery County. OLO asked respondents three questions regarding their experiences with youth sports in Montgomery County. The first question asked respondents to select which, if any, barriers to access to youth sports they experienced. The most frequently selected barrier was “Existing opportunities are too far away,” but respondents reported facing a variety of barriers as shown in the table below.¹

¹ Respondents that selected “Other” mentioned a variety of issues, which are incorporated into the summary of responses to the open-ended questions

Table 19. Barriers to Access to Sports Reported by Respondents (89 respondents)

Barriers	#	%
Existing opportunities are too far away	41	46%
Existing teams are too competitive	32	36%
Cost of fees and equipment is too expensive	28	31%
Cannot find teams or classes in the sport	28	31%
Transportation to and from activities is not available	24	27%
Opportunities are not accessible for children with disabilities	5	6%
Other	19	21%

*Respondents could select more than one option, so percentages add up to more than 100%

OLO also asked respondents the following two open-ended questions:

1. What challenges do you face when seeking opportunities for your children to play sports?
2. How could the County better work to promote access to sports for all children and youth?

Table 20 on the following page summarizes common themes in the responses to the open-ended questions. Overall, the responses reflected similar issues to those highlighted in Table 19 above on barriers to access to sports, but they provide additional context. These responses indicate that strong demand exists for youth sports among respondents’ families. However, available offerings do not meet this demand for a variety of reasons, including scheduling issues, the lack of recreational rather than competitive sports, high costs, and the location of activities.

Table 20. Summary of Respondents' Answers to Open-Ended PTA Survey Questions (91 respondents)

Issue	Description	# of Resp.
Challenges		
Time/Schedules	The time gap between the end of the school day and the start of youth sports activities presents a logistical challenge for parents.	28
Competitiveness	Available sports activities are too competitive, even at very young ages. Respondents struggle to find appropriate activities for their children who want to try a new sport. MCPS interscholastic athletics are very competitive, especially in large high schools, and therefore often exclude many students who want to play, especially those who have not had opportunities to play in elementary and middle school.	23
Cost	Many respondents mentioned cost as a barrier. Some respondents noted that even “affordable” programs charge over \$100 for the season, which is out of reach for many families.	23
Distance	Sports activities do not take place near respondents’ families’ schools or homes, and this distance is often exacerbated by rush hour traffic.	19
Availability of Teams	Respondents cannot find teams for their children to play the sports they want to play. The MCPS interscholastic athletics program does not operate in elementary schools and is very limited at the middle school level.	18
Transportation	Some respondents noted they do not have access to transportation to travel to sports activities.	6
Facilities	Athletic facilities are not available or are poorly maintained.	5
Coaches	Coaches are not available or lack proper training.	3
Information	Respondents cannot find information about sports opportunities.	2
Accessibility	Programs do not serve children with disabilities.	2
Opportunities for County to Increase Access		
Public Sports Programs	MCRD, M-NCPPC’s Montgomery Parks, and MCPS should offer more affordable and accessible youth sports.	34
Recreational Sports	Respondents expressed a desire for more recreational sports that are not tryout-based and are available to children who have not played the sport before.	13
Facilities	Several respondents suggested that the County build more athletic facilities.	12
Information	County agencies should coordinate with each other to disseminate multi-lingual information on youth sports to families through a variety of channels.	10
Sports Before and After School	The County should provide or facilitate youth sports provision at schools during the before- and after-school hours, possibly coordinating with child care providers to address the needs of families with parents who work outside the home.	8
Lower Costs	Lower costs for families that cannot afford a \$100 fee, for example by expanding the subsidy program or reducing fees. Organize equipment swaps.	5
Free Play	To increase participation, offer informal programs that allow children to play in a non-competitive atmosphere without requiring large commitments of time.	4
Transportation	Provide transportation for youth sports, for example by coordinating activity bus schedules with youth sports programs.	4

Chapter 4. Findings and Recommended Discussion Issues

This chapter summarizes the major findings of this report and presents recommended discussion issues developed by the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) based on these findings.

A. Findings

Overall, OLO found that youth sports provision in Montgomery County is not well-aligned with the needs of children and youth, and disparities in participation exist. This section summarizes OLO's findings.

Finding #1. National data shows that children do not do enough physical activity. Youth sports participation has declined in recent years, and wide disparities in participation exist.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans recommend that children ages 6 through 17 should do 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. An extensive body of research shows that physical activity has numerous and significant health, cognitive and academic benefits for children and adolescents. However, survey data indicate that only about a quarter of children in the United States met this guideline in 2016.

Children who play sports are more likely to meet physical activity guidelines compared with their peers. Recent survey data show that the percentage of children under age 12 who played team sports "regularly" has declined in recent years, from 42% in 2011 to 38% in 2018. Data also show wide disparities in sports participation. For example, over 40% of children in families with household incomes above \$100,000 participated regularly in a sport in 2018, compared with just over 20% in families with household incomes under \$25,000.

Finding #2. The Aspen Institute's Project Play offers a framework for increasing youth sports participation that focuses on children under age 12.

The youth sports landscape has shifted in recent decades. Youth sports are inaccessible for many children, and children that do play sports regularly are now playing in competitive travel teams starting as early as age 6. Children quit sports at young ages: a 2019 Aspen Institute/Utah State University survey found that on average, children quit a sport at age 11. In response to these trends, the Aspen Institute's Project Play developed a framework for increasing sport participation among children under age 12 through eight "plays":

1. Ask children what they want to ensure providers are offering it;
2. Reintroduce free play, such as "pick-up" games, which promotes long-term participation in sports;
3. Encourage sport sampling, so that children can try new sports and avoid burnout;
4. Revitalize in-town leagues to increase low-cost locally-based sports opportunities;
5. Think small by identifying small spaces that can be used for sports in underserved communities;
6. Design for development by ensuring sports activities are age-appropriate;
7. Train all coaches to increase the quality of coaching; and
8. Emphasize prevention by limiting head contact and providing alternatives to high-injury sports.

Finding #3. The provision of youth sports in Montgomery County is decentralized.

Several government entities provide youth sports programming and maintain and manage sports facilities in the County. The following table summarizes the roles of the different government agencies that are involved in the provision of youth sports in Montgomery County.

Public Provision of Youth Sports in Montgomery County

Agency/Office	Role
Montgomery County Government (MCG)	
Recreation Department (MCRD)	MCRD provides recreational programs, services and facilities in the County for persons of all ages. MCRD offers non-tax supported programs funded through participant fees, including a youth basketball league for children in grades 3-12, and some tax-supported programs.
Interagency Coordinating Board for Community Use of Public Facilities (ICB)	A 12-member board with representatives designated by MCPS, the Board of Education, the County Executive, the County Council, and M-NCPPC that sets management policies and permit fees for public use of MCPS and County Government facilities.
Office of Community Use of Public Facilities (CUPF)	CUPF processes permit requests from sports leagues and clubs to use athletic fields and other sports facilities located in: (1) MCPS elementary, middle and high schools; (2) MCRD Community Recreation Center athletic fields; and (3) Montgomery County parks.
Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC)	
Montgomery County Planning Board	Establishes policies regarding the use of athletic facilities located in Montgomery County parks
Department of Parks (“Montgomery Parks”)	Manages and maintains a system of 422 parks with athletic facilities including athletic fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, ice rinks, and paved and natural surface trails. Offers fee-based instructional sports programs for children and adolescents at its facilities.
Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS)	
MCPS offers interscholastic athletics to students in all of its 40 middle schools and 25 high schools. At the middle school level, approximately 4,000 of 7 th and 8 th graders participate. At the high school level, approximately 22,000 of 9-12 th graders participate.	
Montgomery County Revenue Authority (MCRA)	
MCRA operates financially self-supporting facilities, including nine golf courses, in the County. Through its MCG Golf Academy, MCRA provides a variety of fee-based instructional golf programs for youth and adults at its facilities and operates the MCG Juniors Golf League.	

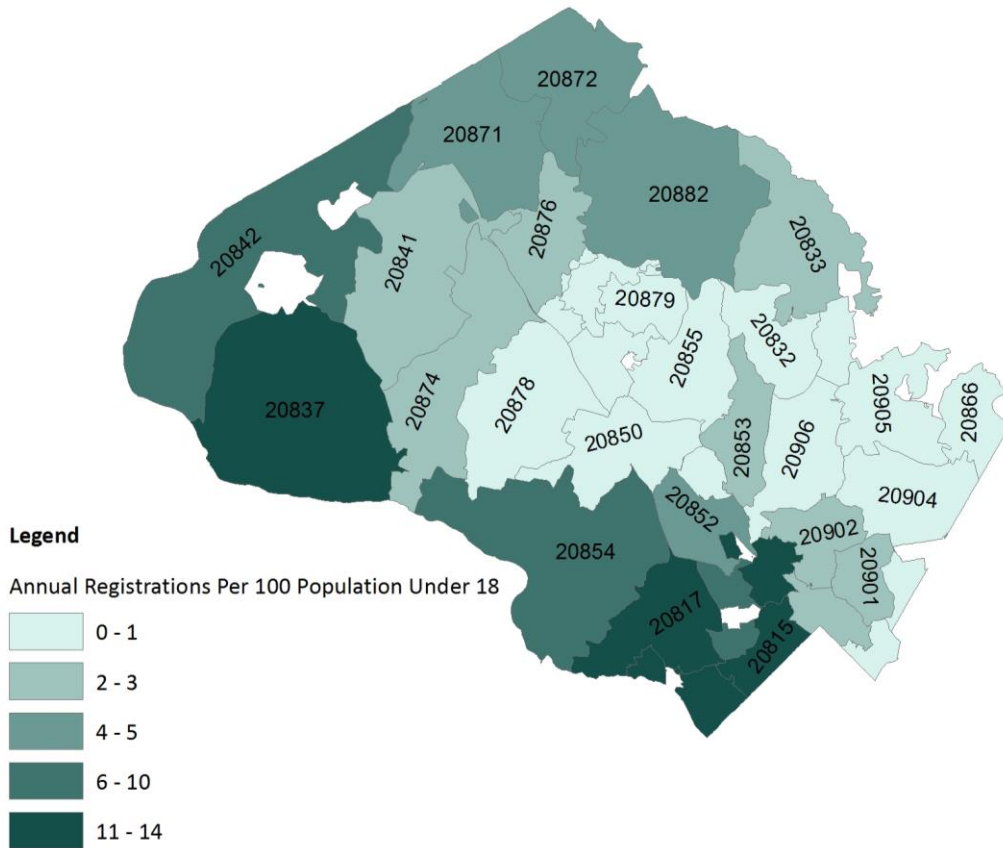
In interviews, several stakeholders noted that the provision of youth sports in Montgomery County is siloed. For example, the Recreation Department, which is part of the County Government, provides public recreation, while the Department of Parks of the M-NCPPC manages athletic facilities in the Montgomery County parks system. Stakeholders expressed concerns that the lack of a unified parks and recreation system in Montgomery County limits the potential for public provision of youth sports in the County. Stakeholders further stated that a variety of organizations in the community provide affordable youth sports in Montgomery County. However, these organizations do not often collaborate or communicate with one another, and County agencies do not have a coordinated approach for working with these organizations to expand access to youth sports.

Finding #4. The Recreation Department’s youth basketball league represents the County Government’s largest youth sports offering. League participants are concentrated in the southwestern and western portions of the County.

Youth basketball leagues represent the Recreation Department’s largest youth sports offering, with over 8,000 youth registrations in FY19. MCRD data for FY17 through FY19 show that:

- Basketball participation increased over the past three years, from just under 7,500 participants in FY17 to over 8,300 participants in FY19, with the largest increase occurring in the 11-13 age group; and
- Male participants accounted for about two thirds of participants in FY19, and the disparity between female and male participation was largest for the older age groups.
- Children in southwestern (Bethesda and Potomac) and western (Poolesville and Dickerson) Montgomery County participated in the basketball leagues at the highest rates while children in the central and eastern sections of the County participated at the lowest rates, as shown on the map below.

FY17-FY19 MCRD Youth Basketball League Registrations by Participant ZIP Code Per 100 Child Population



Finding #5. Private and nonprofit sports leagues and clubs play a major role in youth sports provision in Montgomery County.

In interviews, stakeholders reported that affordable and recreational youth sports in Montgomery County have declined in recent decades. Starting as young as age 6, many children are playing with competitive, tryout-based leagues and clubs that employ paid coaches, charge high participant fees, and demand significant amounts of time and travel from players and their families. While robust recreational leagues and clubs that charge relatively low fees and do not require tryouts are thriving in some parts of the County, many areas lack affordable youth sports programs.

To better understand the private provision of youth sports in Montgomery County, OLO analyzed data on bookings of public athletic facilities in Montgomery County by youth sports leagues and clubs that have received historical use priority from the Office of Community Use of Public Facilities. OLO found that:

- Soccer was the most common sport offered, followed closely by baseball;
- More leagues and clubs served elementary and middle school-aged children than high school youth; and
- 12 out of 89 (13%) leagues and clubs each made more than 1,000 bookings in FY19, accounting for 28,558 out of 44,873 bookings (64%) of bookings by sports leagues and clubs with historical use priority.

OLO also analyzed the locations where leagues and clubs booked facilities. OLO found that these data are difficult to interpret. While the locations of bookings may be somewhat indicative of the populations served by leagues and clubs, they are also reflective of the locations where athletic facilities are located.

Finding #6. Access to athletic facilities is a central concern among government and community stakeholders seeking to increase youth sports participation among underrepresented populations.

In interviews, government and community stakeholders expressed that access to athletic facilities is a key limiting factor in their efforts to increase access to sports among underserved populations. Similarly, in an online survey of youth sports providers, access to athletic facilities was the most common barrier or challenge mentioned by respondents.

Some stakeholders suggested that the ICB and Planning Board policies of giving priority to organizations that have used the athletic facilities in the past undermines efforts to increase youth sports participation rates and perpetuates disparities in access. Stakeholders also noted that youth who want to play “pick up” sports on an informal basis (e.g. without booking a facility through CUPF) often cannot find spaces to play that have not been reserved by other users. Some argued that certain programs, such as those run by the Recreation Department (which currently do not have priority in M-NCPPC facilities), or programs that serve local communities, should be given priority over historical users.

OLO also heard feedback that facility costs and the CUPF booking process presents challenges for youth sports providers. Organizations that provide affordable youth sports opportunities typically have limited sources of revenue, and many are volunteer-run. As a result, even modest facility fees can create a burden for these organizations. Finding space for programs often requires extensive networking with school officials, and nonprofit organizations expressed a desire for increased support for finding space to operate their programs.

Finding #7. Youth sports providers in Montgomery County rely heavily on volunteers. However, recruiting and training volunteer coaches is a growing challenge.

Respondents to OLO's survey of youth sports providers reported being heavily reliant on volunteers. Over a third of respondents reported that they had no paid staff. Only two out of 30 respondents reported that they did not use volunteers, and nearly a third reported that over 50 volunteers served their programs.

In interviews, stakeholders reported that due in part to parents' long working hours. Some individuals are also concerned about liability issues. Furthermore, in communities where many parents work multiple jobs, sports programs cannot rely on volunteers. Stakeholders also noted that some volunteer-coached programs suffer from poor coaching, which can have the unintended effect of discouraging children from playing sports.

Finding #8. The timing, location, cost and competitiveness of youth sports offerings in Montgomery County are not aligned with the needs of many families.

To better understand families' experiences with youth sports in Montgomery County, OLO conducted an anonymous online survey of parent-teacher association (PTA) members. Respondents identified a variety of challenges they face in finding and participating in youth sports for their families, including the following:

- The time gap between the end of the school day and the start of youth sports activities presents a logistical challenge for many parents.
- Sports activities do not take place near respondents' families' schools or homes, and this distance is often exacerbated by rush hour traffic. Some families do not have access to transportation.
- Available sports activities are too competitive, even at very young ages. Respondents struggle to find appropriate activities for their children who want to try a new sport. MCPS interscholastic athletics are very competitive, especially in large high schools, and therefore often exclude students who have not had opportunities to play the sport outside of school before high school.
- Cost is a significant barrier. Over a third of respondents reported paying over \$2,000 annually for one child to play sports. Some respondents noted that even the most affordable programs charge over \$100 for the season, which is out of reach for many families.
- Respondents cannot find teams for their children to play the sports they want to play. The MCPS interscholastic athletics program does not operate in elementary schools, and is very limited at the middle school level.
- Programs do not serve children with disabilities.

Respondents expressed a desire for more recreational sports that are not tryout-based, are available to children who have not played the sport before, and take place at their children's schools.

B. Recommended Discussion Issues

OLO offers three recommended discussion issues for the Council to raise with agency representatives.

Discussion Issue #1. Access to public athletic facilities

OLO found that access to athletic facilities is a central concern among government and community stakeholders seeking to increase participation in youth sports among underrepresented populations. Some stakeholders suggested that historical use priority policies undermine efforts to increase participation in youth sports and perpetuate disparities in access. Stakeholders also noted that youth who want to play “pick up” sports on an informal basis often cannot find spaces to play that have not been reserved by other users. Additionally, nonprofit organizations expressed a desire for increased support for finding space to operate their programs.

The Council may wish to discuss with agency representatives policies and processes around community use of public athletic facilities to identify ways to support affordable sports programs and encourage free play. Of note, OLO’s FY20 work program includes two projects related to two projects related to community use of public facilities. These upcoming reports may inform this discussion.

Discussion Issue #2. Addressing silos in youth sports provision

OLO found that the provision of youth sports in Montgomery County is decentralized. For example, the Recreation Department, which is part of the County Government, provides public recreation programs, while CUPF issues permits to use public athletic facilities, and the Department of Parks of the M-NCPPC manages athletic facilities in the Montgomery County parks system. OLO also found that a variety of private and nonprofit organizations in the community provide affordable youth sports in Montgomery County.

Stakeholder observations gathered from interviews indicate that opportunities exist for these organizations to collaborate more with one another. The Council may wish to discuss with agency representatives options to address silos in youth sports provision, such as:

- Convening government stakeholders and youth sports providers to discuss access to and participation in youth sports in order to identify specific strategies, encourage partnerships and reduce silos; and
- Organizing a sports fair to help parents learn about sports programs in their communities that are appropriate for their child.

Discussion Issue #3. Promoting and expanding affordable and recreational youth sports programs

The timing, location, cost and competitiveness of youth sports offerings in Montgomery County are not aligned with the needs of many families. OLO found that families would like to have more affordable and less competitive youth sports opportunities at their children's schools. Currently, the Recreation Department operates countywide youth basketball leagues. The leagues had over 8,000 registrations in FY19, and participation has grown over the past three years. However, participants are concentrated in the western and southwestern sections of the County, and girls are underrepresented. The Council may wish to discuss with agency representatives options for promoting and expanding affordable and recreational youth sports programs in the County, including:

- Supporting existing programs by offering training for volunteer coaches or providing transportation;
- Exploring new partnerships with existing organizations that provide sports in underserved areas of the County and/or to underrepresented youth; and
- Examining the feasibility and demand for expanding the public provision of fee-based youth sports programs.

Chapter 5. Agency Comments

The Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) shared final drafts of this report with staff from Montgomery County Government, Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery Parks. OLO appreciates the time taken by agency staffs to review the draft report and to provide technical feedback. This final report incorporates technical corrections and feedback received from agency staffs.

The written comments received from the Chief Administrative Officer are attached in their entirety on the following page.



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Andrew W. Kleine
Chief Administrative Officer

MEMORANDUM

March 2, 2020

TO: Chris Cihlar, Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Andrew Kleine, Chief Administrative Officer *AWK*

SUBJECT: Draft OLO Report 2020-4: Youth Sports in Montgomery County

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Office of Legislative Oversight's (OLO) Draft Report 2020-4: Youth Sports in Montgomery County. As indicated in the research, children's experiences in youth sports can have important long-term consequences for their health and well-being. This report provides a useful overview of the landscape of youth sports in Montgomery County and reviews evidence on access to youth sports, noting wide disparities exist.

Recommendations:

The report's three (3) recommended discussion issues provides us with an opportunity to examine our current level of service and identify strategies for ensuring an appropriate and equitable balance of programs and facilities, and to examine the County's relationship with other youth sport service providers.

CAO Response:

We recognize that youth sports have the potential to improve outcomes and yield high social returns and impact health and wellness. We acknowledge the significance of the discussion issues presented in this report and we stand ready to work with the Council. We are committed to begin meaningful conversations with the Council and community stakeholders. Having these conversations will help us to enhance programs and to establish policies and initiatives that are embedded with equity outcomes; and to better understand the important role of public recreation services, facilities and programs for effectuating equity in youth sports.

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report and present our comments. We look forward to providing more detailed information and analysis as needed.

cc: Fariba Kassiri, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
Robin Riley, Director, Department of Recreation
Ramona Bell-Pearson, Director, Community Use of Public Facilities
Dale Tibbitts, Special Assistant to the County Executive

List of Appendices

Appendix	Title	Begins at
A	• Recreation Department Youth Basketball League Registrations By ZIP Code	©1
B	• 2019 Hourly Facility Fees for M-NCPPC, MCPS and MCRD Athletic Facilities	©2
C	• MCPS High School Interscholastic Athletics Program Participation, 2014-2019	©3
D	• FY19 CUPF Bookings of Athletic Facilities By Youth Sports Leagues and Clubs	©5

Appendix A. Recreation Department Youth Basketball League Registrations By ZIP Code, FY17-FY19

ZIP Code	Place	Population Under 18	Basketball League Registrations	Annual Average Registrations Per 100 Population Under 18
20814	Bethesda	5,505	1,558	9
20815	Chevy Chase	6,508	2,129	11
20816	Bethesda	4,283	1,600	12
20817	Bethesda	9,364	3,424	12
20818	Cabin John	484	161	11
20832	Olney	6,485	249	1
20833	Brookeville	1,763	83	2
20837	Poolesville	1,614	678	14
20841	Boyds	2,983	268	3
20842	Dickerson	212	59	9
20850	Rockville	10,550	379	1
20851	Rockville	3,713	33	0
20852	Rockville	8,711	932	4
20853	Rockville	6,679	373	2
20854	Potomac	12,317	2,884	8
20855	Derwood	2,684	52	1
20860	Sandy Spring	915	31	1
20866	Burtonsville	3,845	143	1
20871	Clarksburg	6,746	1,011	5
20872	Damascus	3,338	393	4
20874	Germantown	16,139	797	2
20876	Germantown	6,498	293	2
20877	Gaithersburg	9,499	71	0
20878	Gaithersburg	15,930	703	1
20879	Gaithersburg	6,837	78	0
20882	Gaithersburg	2,851	368	4
20886	Montgomery Village	8,692	106	0
20895	Kensington	4,857	1,663	11
20901	Silver Spring	9,173	469	2
20902	Silver Spring	13,347	717	2
20903	Silver Spring	7,115	53	0
20904	Silver Spring	12,513	340	1
20905	Silver Spring	4,099	167	1
20906	Silver Spring	14,802	433	1
20910	Silver Spring	7,208	586	3
20912	Takoma Park	6,245	209	1

Source: OLO Analysis of MCRD Data

Appendix B. Hourly Facility Fees for Use of M-NCPPC, MCPS and MCRD Athletic Facilities, 2019

	M-NCPPC Parks	MCPS and MCRD
Athletic fields	<p><u>Local/Neighborhood Park Fields: \$9</u></p> <p><u>Regional/Recreational Park Fields (unlit)</u> Youth \$18 Adult: \$27 Four-hour minimum</p> <p><u>Regional/Recreational Park Fields (lighted)</u> Youth: \$33 Adult: \$42</p> <p><u>Synthetic Turf (unlit)</u> Nonprofit & County residents: \$110 Commercial & non-County residents: \$180</p> <p><u>Synthetic Turf (lighted)</u> Nonprofit & County residents: \$145 Commercial & non-County residents: \$215</p> <p><u>Miracle Field</u> Youth: \$25 Adult: \$30</p> <p><u>Wheaton Sport Pavilion Indoor Synthetic Turf*</u> County residents: \$80-\$135 Non-County residents: \$96-\$160</p>	<p><u>MCPS & MCRD fields: \$5</u></p> <p><u>MCPS Synthetic Turf (unlit)</u> Nonprofit & county residents: \$125 Commercial & non-county residents: \$200</p> <p><u>MCPS Synthetic Turf (lighted)</u> Nonprofit & county residents: \$160 Commercial & non-county residents: \$235</p> <p><u>MCPS Stadium Fields (unlit)</u> Nonprofit/County residents - youth: \$50 Nonprofit/County residents - adult: \$75 Commercial & non-County residents: \$175</p> <p><u>MCPS Stadium Fields (lighted)</u> Nonprofit/County residents - youth: \$50 Nonprofit/County residents - adult: \$75 Commercial & non-County residents: \$175</p>
Other facilities	<p><u>Outdoor Basketball and Tennis Courts</u> Resident: \$10 Non-Resident: \$12</p> <p><u>Woodside Gymnasium</u> County resident: \$40 Non-County resident: \$48</p> <p><u>Ridge Road In-Line Hockey Rink</u> County resident: \$10 Non-County resident: \$12</p>	<p><u>School Gymnasium (rate varies by day and time)</u> PTA, MCPS Partnerships & Government: \$10.50-\$24 Nonprofit & Community groups: \$11-\$40 For-profit: \$13.50-\$50</p> <p><u>MCPS Tennis Courts</u> Non-profit: \$10.00 For-profit: \$15.00</p>
Cancel Fee	\$50	\$25

* Wheaton Sport Pavilion rates vary by season and hours. Groups may book half a field and pay 50%.
Source: "Athletic Field Fees," Office of Community Use of Public Facilities, < <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cupf/resources/Files/FeeChart-fields.pdf> > accessed 12/23/2019, "Community Use of Public Facilities Fees," Office of Community Use of Public Facilities Website, < <https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/cupf/info-reservation/CurrentFees.html> > accessed 12/23/2019, and "Fees," Montgomery Parks Website, < <https://www.montgomeryparks.org/services/permits-rentals/fees/> > accessed 12/23/2019.

Total Participation Data (2014-19)

Student Athlete Participation by Sport: 2014-15 through 2018-19

Boys						Girls					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Baseball	748	772	771	707	752	Baseball	--	--	--	--	--
Basketball	713	729	732	731	709	Basketball	597	595	620	602	574
Bocce (Corollary)	121	141	125	132	138	Bocce (Corollary)	98	96	103	108	97
Cross Country	828	834	803	806	839	Cross Country	579	569	545	547	569
Field Hockey						Field Hockey	852	846	837	845	864
Football	2087	1997	1953	1919	1875	Football	--	--	--	--	--
Golf	191	191	194	188	189	Golf	38	45	38	43	49
Gymnastics						Gymnastics	138	131	145	119	136
Lacrosse	1124	1146	1177	1026	1073	Lacrosse	980	1028	1042	938	1040
Soccer	1068	1067	1081	1043	1105	Soccer	928	968	978	926	957
Softball						Softball	688	683	675	645	679
Softball (Corollary)	128	138	138	82	117	Softball (Corollary)	120	112	122	91	107
Swimming & Diving	627	613	663	692	674	Swimming & Diving	715	822	824	815	792
Team Handball (Corollary)	162	178	140	111	103	Team Handball (Corollary)	60	53	69	48	49
Tennis	382	407	407	349	382	Tennis	392	389	369	338	358
Track & Field-Indoor	879	925	1047	953	879	Track & Field-Indoor	842	891	867	773	674
Track & Field-Outdoor	1170	1341	1320	1194	1242	Track & Field-Outdoor	1131	1210	1127	971	1034
Volleyball	463	485	501	463	449	Volleyball	895	871	891	901	892
Wrestling	727	751	751	766	713	Wrestling	12	18	32	46	37

"--" Results are not reported for groups of 10 students or less, pursuant to FERPA

NOTE: Data is maintained each year and was pulled July 2019 for this report

IEP and 504 Participation Data (2014-19)

Athletic Participation of Students with IEP's and 504's by Sport: 2014-15 through 2018-19

Boys						Girls					
	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19		2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19
Baseball	67	67	80	27	94	Baseball	--	--	--	--	--
Basketball	102	71	79	65	89	Basketball	40	39	38	36	41
Bocce (Corollary)	94	112	100	93	101	Bocce (Corollary)	42	49	56	46	47
Cross Country	83	86	111	103	125	Cross Country	35	37	36	30	33
Field Hockey						Field Hockey	32	44	52	48	56
Football	270	320	357	314	341	Football	--	--	--	--	--
Golf	24	27	23	17	22	Golf	--	--	--	--	--
Gymnastics						Gymnastics	--	--	12	--	19
Lacrosse	122	126	117	104	156	Lacrosse	48	42	52	47	73
Soccer	58	83	55	75	97	Soccer	35	51	72	44	64
Softball						Softball	45	51	58	53	60
Softball (Corollary)	81	122	97	59	94	Softball (Corollary)	35	38	87	37	46
Swimming & Diving	63	52	69	37	83	Swimming & Diving	41	63	51	48	82
Team Handball (Corollary)	73	71	51	48	49	Team Handball (Corollary)	12	19	33	19	18
Tennis	16	19	31	21	35	Tennis	11	13	19	17	12
Track & Field-Indoor	92	100	119	117	112	Track & Field-Indoor	47	--	56	38	49
Track & Field-Outdoor	137	125	130	133	156	Track & Field-Outdoor	73	63	61	56	70
Volleyball	31	37	22	19	28	Volleyball	26	42	32	40	47
Wrestling	121	128	114	107	138	Wrestling	--	--	--	--	--

"--" Results are not reported for groups of 10 students or less, pursuant to FERPA

NOTE: Data is maintained each year and was pulled July 2019 for this report

Appendix D. FY19 CUPF Bookings of Athletic Facilities By Youth Sports Leagues and Clubs With Historical Use Priority By ZIP Code

ZIP Code	Place	Population Under 18	Total Bookings	League/Club Bookings	Baseball	Basketball	Football	Soccer	Softball	Lacrosse
20818	Cabin John	484	226	211	115	43	43	45	0	51
20842	Dickerson	212	92	17	0	17	0	0	0	0
20860	Sandy Spring	915	800	228	13	8	0	27	8	46
20833	Brookeville	1,763	466	265	0	0	0	0	0	0
20837	Poolesville	1,614	1,455	192	135	47	0	10	0	0
20851	Rockville	3,713	1,482	45	33	17	13	1	4	0
20814	Bethesda	5,505	4,538	1,510	695	428	219	471	64	47
20832	Olney	6,485	4,127	2,175	533	61	414	79	356	435
20841	Boyd's	2,983	674	578	488	1	1	90	69	0
20817	Bethesda	9,364	8,665	3,168	1,617	1,410	918	1,656	51	102
20855	Derwood	2,684	2,419	968	94	21	42	187	0	6
20872	Damascus	3,338	3,529	1,307	383	0	258	241	232	225
20815	Chevy Chase	6,508	4,891	1,970	806	631	148	1,115	43	28
20852	Rockville	8,711	4,976	2,032	977	492	437	705	114	105
20854	Potomac	12,317	7,945	3,980	1,873	1,367	1,249	2,593	134	167
20816	Bethesda	4,283	2,954	1,379	938	321	132	442	8	10
20871	Clarksburg	6,746	5,490	2,404	1,649	324	546	656	1,070	37
20853	Rockville	6,679	4,117	821	226	237	54	359	122	122
20882	Gaithersburg	2,851	820	638	309	115	116	115	5	1
20878	Gaithersburg	15,930	6,266	1,833	949	834	776	1,522	17	45
20912	Takoma Park	6,245	1,023	107	1	42	0	99	1	0
20850	Rockville	10,550	5,605	1,809	753	526	591	942	0	192
20879	Gaithersburg	6,837	6,642	1,818	499	437	301	878	116	117
20903	Silver Spring	7,115	1,358	581	102	246	46	385	89	145
20874	Germantown	16,139	8,419	2,411	1,080	560	305	1,268	46	14
20904	Silver Spring	12,513	6,092	2,093	901	549	531	514	736	157

ZIP Code	Place	Population Under 18	Total Bookings	League/Club Bookings	Baseball	Basketball	Football	Soccer	Softball	Lacrosse
20895	Kensington	4,857	4,006	1,670	1,163	791	603	760	68	7
20901	Silver Spring	9,173	4,573	1,134	533	475	35	698	408	34
20906	Silver Spring	14,802	4,571	1,185	475	321	355	410	373	339
20876	Germantown	6,498	3,750	1,524	863	304	220	629	224	50
20886	Montgomery Village	8,692	514	63	0	0	0	63	0	0
20866	Burtonsville	3,845	2,266	1,130	851	197	165	123	758	109
20902	Silver Spring	13,347	8,707	1,766	819	845	193	768	317	43
20905	Silver Spring	4,099	1,793	436	113	12	23	14	76	3
20910	Silver Spring	7,208	2,687	1,087	449	460	277	863	45	0
20877	Gaithersburg	9,499	3,853	338	162	4	4	101	11	21

Sources: OLO analysis of CUPF data and U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2017 Five-Year Estimates