

“I think sports and girls go together. Bridges brings girls together and teaches them how much fun sports are. Sports are for girls.”

— Corinna, Girls Inc. of Carpinteria, CA

Why This Program?

Girls Inc. aims to make sports an integral part of girls' lives and recognizes that girls have much to gain by early and sustained participation in sports. Though the number of girls participating in sports has steadily increased since the passage of Title IX in 1972, too many girls still encounter roadblocks that leave them sitting on the sidelines instead of sprinting toward the finish line. When their access to sports participation is limited, girls miss the chance to develop skills that will help them succeed and habits that can keep them healthy throughout their lives.

For girls, participation in sports has been shown to reduce the risk for obesity, delay the initiation of first intercourse, lower the frequency of sexual intercourse, decrease the number of lifetime sexual partners, and reduce the likelihood of a female adolescent getting pregnant.

Research shows that just over one-fourth of girls ages 9 to 13 report no free-time physical activity, classifying themselves as sedentary outside of school. Having access to sports and physical activity both at and outside of school, and in an environment that provides positive support and minimizes a “win at all costs” perspective while emphasizing healthy competition, can be key to girls embracing sports as an integral part of their lives.

About the Program: Girls Inc. Sporting Chance®

Through Girls Inc. Sporting Chance®, girls build a foundation for enjoying physical activity, sports, and adventure throughout their lives. Girls develop movement and athletic skills, cooperative and competitive spirit, and healthy habits. They experience the benefits and excitement of taking positive risks that bolster their self-confidence and personal growth.

- **SteppingstonesSM** (for girls ages 6 to 8) develops motor skills that gets girls running, jumping, leaping, twisting, bending, and balancing as they utilize a variety of sports and movement-related equipment, including jump ropes, balls, scooters, bats, bowling pins, nets, hoops, and scoops. Girls begin to move more confidently and skillfully, get used to structured physical activity, learn about the positive connection between physical activity and health-related fitness, and accept sport as legitimate activity for girls and women. The movement skills that girls develop in SteppingstonesSM may later apply to the formal movement in a variety of games, sports, dance, and fitness activities.

- **BridgesSM** (for girls ages 9 to 11) picks up where SteppingstonesSM leaves off, enhancing girls' motor skills while introducing girls to the world of organized sports. Participants focus on the skills and strategies of four sports: softball (throwing, catching, and batting); soccer (kicking and agility); basketball (shooting and teamwork); and tennis (striking and individual competence). Girls learn the concepts of offense, defense, and teamwork, and develop sport-specific skills in a progression that leads to game readiness and provides a foundation for lifelong participation in sports.

- **Girls enCourage[®]** (for girls ages 12 to 14) is designed to sustain girls' interest in sports through adolescence by introducing them to nontraditional activities and adventures that go beyond stereotypes and challenge them to set their own personal goals and create their own definitions of success. Participation in program activities promotes movement skills, team cohesion, and health awareness to develop girls' sense of personal power and worth. As they master new physical techniques and learn to take calculated risks, girls build not only physical strength, but also courage, confidence, self-reliance, and other critical life skills.

Ancillary Component:

BoneZone[®] (for girls ages 9 to 12) was developed as part of a national Bone Health Campaign. The component uses engaging physical activity, nutritional information, and advocacy by girls to promote bone health and reduce girls' risk of developing osteoporosis later in life.

About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. delivers life-changing programs that inspire girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Research-based curricula, delivered by trained professionals, equip girls to achieve academically; lead healthy and physically active lives; manage money; navigate media messages; and discover an interest in science, technology, engineering, and math. The network of local Girls Inc. nonprofit organizations serves 150,000 girls annually at over 1,400 sites in 350 cities across the United States and Canada. Learn more about our programs and advocacy at: www.girlsinc.org.

