

Access & Inclusion

Girls on the Run believes that all girls and communities should have access to our programs. We strive to eliminate barriers to participation, to continue creating programming that engages all communities, to be intentional about staff and volunteer diversity, and to promote a culture of inclusion across the organization.

At Girls on the Run our core values guide us to be open-hearted, intentional decision makers who embrace differences and stand up for ourselves and others. Our dedication to these core values is reflected in our decision to make access and inclusion an organizational priority. We are committed to ensuring that our programs are accessible to any girl who wants to participate – with a goal of serving two million girls across the country by 2021. Efforts to reach this goal are rooted in our access and inclusion strategy.

Our commitment to access and inclusion is resolute and the national headquarters of Girls on the Run is leading the way – hiring a Director of Access and Inclusion, revamping staff recruitment and retention plans, expanding our networks, and continuing to improve programming. In addition, headquarters staff is purposefully engaging in professional development that will allow us to reap the many benefits of being an inclusive organization. Girls on the Run councils deliver programming in all fifty states. Together we stand firm in the commitment to access and inclusion and share the responsibility of preparing staff and volunteers to foster culturally responsive environments across the organization.

Access and Inclusion Initiative (2017-2021)

We define access as the ability to participate in programming, retrieve resources and engage in volunteer opportunities. This relates directly to our core value of *recognizing our power and responsibility to be intentional in our decision making*. We understand that decisions we make directly impact access for our families, staff and volunteers.

For girls and families

Our goal is to provide access by ensuring that:

- Girls on the Run is available at their school or in their community

- We remain mindful of participation barriers, such as cost and transportation, and strive to find ways to eliminate them
- All aspects of the registration process are equitable
- We do our best to address language barriers for families with limited English proficiency

For headquarters and councils

Our goal is to provide access by ensuring that:

- Headquarters, council staff, and board members reflect the diversity of the communities we serve
- Coaches reflect the diversity of the communities each council serves
- Sites and girls reflect the diversity of the communities each council serves
- Marketing materials reflect the diversity of the many communities Girls on the Run serves

We define inclusion as the act of authentically engaging, affirming and valuing all members of the Girls on the Run community. This relates to our core value of *embracing our differences and finding strength in our connectedness*. In order to reach true inclusivity, we must be intentional in our approach.

For girls and families

Our goal is to be inclusive by ensuring that:

- All girls feel that the curriculum is relevant and reflects their life experiences
- All girls feel listened to, valued and part of a team
- We are mindful of girls with physical and cognitive disabilities and strive to provide curriculum modifications when needed
- Girls have a coach who has been trained to understand social context, create positive inclusive environments, and build genuine relationships

Headquarters' commitment to councils

Our goal is to support the value of inclusivity by ensuring that:

- Access and inclusion efforts are strategic and transparent
- Access and inclusion initiatives are supported with financial and human resources
- Access and inclusion initiatives are supported with professional development opportunities
- Councils that are meeting and sustaining their access and inclusion goals are celebrated

Rationale

Over the past 20 years our organization has grown tremendously – from serving 13 girls in Charlotte in 1996 to serving over 1 million girls nationwide today. In response to our tremendous growth, now is the time to commit to being intentional about access and inclusion, and to leverage our intellectual, financial, and human resources to create strategic initiatives that will truly enable us to be accessible to all girls.

We envision a world where every girl knows and activates her limitless potential and is free to boldly pursue her dreams. However, we recognize that many girls face challenges and barriers that make reaching their potential more difficult for them than their peers. Recent Girls on the Run research findings suggest that our programs have a positive impact on all girls who participate and have the greatest impact on girls who begin the season less physically active and with lower perceptions of their physical, social and emotional competencies. This knowledge further underscores our responsibility to remove barriers to access and to provide programming that is inclusive of girls from all backgrounds and communities.

Our access and inclusion work begins with our headquarters and over 220 councils working to bring diverse voices to the table. We know that multiple perspectives will not only strengthen the quality and scope of our access initiatives but strengthen our organization overall. We strive to be a reflection of the communities we engage, not only in appearance, but also through fostering an atmosphere of community connectedness that serves as a model for our girls and other stakeholders.