



## Boy Programming FAQs

We inspire girls to be joyful, healthy, and confident using a fun, experienced-based curriculum which creatively integrates running and we envision a world where every girl knows and activates her limitless potential and is free to boldly pursue her dreams.

Our mission and our vision intentionally focuses on girls.

### **PUBLIC INQUIRIES**

#### [Why do you only focus on girls?](#)

The Girls on the Run® program and curricula are designed specifically for 3<sup>rd</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade girls and research studies have been conducted which show positive results for a girls-only program. Historically, girls have had limited access to these opportunities, specifically in sports and physical activity-based contexts. While the number of opportunities has increased over the years, girls continue to receive lower levels of social support for participation. Additionally, programs often fail to provide a learning climate which supports the optimal development of girls. As such, extensive efforts have gone into the design and evaluation of a research-based program that specifically addresses topics and challenges that girls encounter during late childhood and adolescence in a psychologically safe environment.

#### [What research have we done on the Girls on the Run programming?](#)

Girls on the Run® International has implemented several internal and external research studies evaluating program impact since 2002. In 2016, the organization embarked on a rigorous national-level, longitudinal study of program effectiveness conducted by Dr. Maureen Weiss. This study is detailed in the narrative below as well as in a summary report on the Girls on the Run website. Manuscripts for submission to peer-reviewed journals are being prepared Dr. Weiss and her research team.

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### **National Evaluation**

In 2016, Dr. Maureen Weiss, University of Minnesota, conducted an independent study evaluating the impact of Girls on the Run® (GOTR) on positive youth development. The findings provide strong evidence that GOTR has a positive impact on girls during the program and beyond, and makes a stronger impact than organized sports and school physical education in teaching life skills. The intentional life skills curriculum and coach training program are key to our impact and are exemplars for other youth programs.

There were two main study questions: (1) Do GOTR participants differ from a comparison group of girls not in GOTR on developmental outcomes and life skills? (2) Do GOTR participants show improvements from pre- to post-season on developmental outcomes and retain improvements three months after season's end?

Study participants included 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade girls in GOTR and girls who had never participated in GOTR, matched by grade and school. Survey measures included the 5Cs, physical activity, and life skills transfer. Focus groups interviews with girls, coaches, parents/guardians, and school personnel delved into depth on life lessons and outcomes attained through participating in GOTR.

Key findings: (1) GOTR girls compared favorably to non-GOTR girls on connection, caring, coach autonomy support, and life skills transfer, (2) GOTR girls improved from pre- and/or post-season to follow-up on confidence and connection, and sustained ability to use life skills learned in GOTR from post-season to follow-up, and (3) GOTR girls starting below the pre-season average made dramatic improvements on all developmental outcomes from pre- to post-season and in most cases from post-season to follow-up. Focus group findings complemented survey data and provided in-depth narrative on season-long improvements.

In summary, findings using a matched comparison group, a longitudinal design, and multiple methods provided strong evidence that GOTR is effective in promoting season-long and lasting improvement in developmental outcomes. The intentional life skills curriculum and comprehensive coach training offer strong explanations for findings of program impact and can serve as exemplars for other after-school programs.

### Has Girls on the Run considered creating a program for boys?

Girls on the Run® International did attempt to pilot a “Boys on the Run” program several years ago, however, due to the curricula being specific to girls, the boys program was not successful. Although there are no plans to start a Boys on the Run program, we encourage individuals or organizations who have the resources to dedicate to a similar boys’ program to do so.

### What about boys that need a similar developmental program?

All youth should have the opportunity to participate in programming which builds on their strengths, and facilitates healthy outcomes. However, we focus on girls due to the historical inequities and the remaining issues that are girl-specific. Due to our focus on girls, we have not conducted the appropriate research and development to offer a comparable program for boys.

### What if a boy wants to participate in Girls on the Run?

Girls on the Run® was developed for girls, not boys. Therefore, we do not allow boys to participate in the program. However, we do have a transgender policy which allows for boys, identifying themselves as girls, to participate in the program. Additionally, siblings and other family members are welcome to register as participants for open or public Girls on the Run 5K events.

### Does Girls on the Run recommend a similar program for boys?

Girls on the Run® does not recommend any of the boy programs at this time. We have not performed the necessary due diligence that would enable us to endorse these programs with confidence. Also, while we recognize that many of these programs “mirror” Girls on the Run in structure, to our knowledge, no independent research has been done to conclude that this is the best structure for boy programming.

### What are the boy programs?

We are aware of three programs that are currently offering programming for boys that mirrors a Girls on the Run® program. We have not participated in the development of any of these programs. We have tried to help on a limited basis as questions are asked.

**Let Me Run:** started in Charlotte, NC by a former Girls on the Run coach. Has expanded to other states.

**STRIDE:** started in Pennsylvania by the Brandywine YMCA, an affiliate Girls on the Run council.

**Excel2Fitness:** started in Charlotte, NC by a male Phys. Ed. teacher familiar with Girls on the Run.