



Public Policies and Physical Activity of SBAFS: conception, activities and perspectives working group

Grupo de Trabalho em Políticas Públicas e Atividade Física da SBAFS: concepção, atividades e perspectivas

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ABSTRACT

The Brazilian Society of Physical Activity and Health (*Sociedade Brasileira de Atividade Física e Saúde* – SBAFS), since its inception in 2007, has played an important role in bringing together students, professionals, and researchers to strengthen the field in Brazil. Among the various initiatives of the SBAFS, the Working Group on Public Policies and Physical Activity was created in September 2018. Its mission is to position the SBAFS in the development of public policies related to physical activity in Brazil, collaborate with other stakeholders for the advancement of these policies, and stimulate the discussion, systematization, and dissemination of knowledge and practices in public policies in this area. In this context, this article describes the creation, activities, and actions of the working group from its inception until 2024, as well as the challenges and future perspectives for the theme.

Keywords: Public policies; Physical activity; Health.

RESUMO

A *Sociedade Brasileira de Atividade Física e Saúde (SBAFS)*, desde a sua criação em 2007, exerce importante papel na congregação de estudantes, profissionais e pesquisadores com o objetivo de fortalecer a área no Brasil. Entre as diversas ações da SBAFS, em setembro de 2018 foi criado o Grupo de Trabalho de Políticas Públicas e Atividade Física, que tem como missão posicionar a SBAFS no desenvolvimento de políticas públicas relacionadas à atividade física no Brasil, articular com outros atores em prol do desenvolvimento destas e estimular a discussão, sistematização e divulgação de conhecimentos e práticas em políticas públicas nessa área. Neste contexto, o presente artigo descreve a criação, atividades e ações do grupo de trabalho desde a criação até o ano de 2024, assim como apresentar desafios e perspectivas futuras para a temática.

Palavras-chave: Políticas públicas; Atividade física; Saúde.

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Introduction

The necessity of advocating for the creation of an

agenda, dissemination, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of public policies that promote physi-

cal activity at federal, state, and municipal levels is well documented. There is also a recognized need to expand and strengthen initiatives and programs that promote physical activity, particularly within the health sector, but not limited to it¹. Such actions should fundamentally prioritize community interests, uphold citizens rights to access physical activity, and aim to increase the population's overall levels of physical activity.

The inclusion of physical activity in Brazil's health agenda, especially after the publication of the World Health Organization's Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health², has notably expanded. This is evidenced by the integration of physical activity into Brazil's population monitoring systems—such as the Surveillance of Risk and Protective Factors for Chronic Diseases by Telephone Survey (*Vigilância de Fatores de Risco e Proteção para Doenças Crônicas por Inquérito Telefônico - Vigitel*), the National School Health Survey (*Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde do Escolar - PeNSE*), and the National Health Survey (*Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde - PNS*)—as well as in the National Health Promotion Policy and the National Primary Health Care Policy. Additionally, numerous actions, programs, and policies promoting physical activity have been implemented, such as the inclusion of physical education professionals in Family Health Support Centers, now e-Multi, the Health Gym Program, Psychosocial Care Centers, the Financial Incentive for Promoting Physical Activity in Primary Health Care, and the inclusion of physical activity in multiprofessional residencies³. The expansion of diverse roles across various programs and contexts (hospital, community, and primary care) underscores the recognition of physical activity as an integral part of public health policy ecosystems.

Since its establishment in 2007, the Brazilian Society of Physical Activity and Health (*Sociedade Brasileira de Atividade Física e Saúde - SBAFS*) has played a crucial role in uniting students, professionals, and researchers to strengthen this field in Brazil. A significant diagnosis conducted by the SBAFS board during its 2018-2019 term revealed the need to increase member participation and address emerging topics in the field. This led to the creation of seven initial working groups (WG) focused on different themes, four of which (in bold) remain active: **1) WG on Public Policies and Physical Activity**; **2) WG on Sedentary Behavior**; **3) WG on Body practices and physical activity in the School Context**; **4) WG on Environment and Physical Activity**; **5) WG on Body Practices and Physical Activity**

and Primary Health Care; **6) WG on Physical Activity and Workers' Health**; **7) WG on Measurement of Physical Activity and Sedentary Behavior**. Additionally, a new WG was established during the COVID-19 pandemic: the **WG on Physical Activity and COVID-19**. As of 2024, SBAFS has five active WGs carrying out thematic initiatives.

These WGs were established to foster collaboration among SBAFS researchers with shared interests. The formation process of these groups began with the identification of researchers who could voluntarily lead the WGs, followed by formal invitations and the development of agendas based on the demands of each WG's community.

Since the launch of the National Health Promotion Policy in 2006, Brazil has experienced significant growth in the framework of policies, actions, and strategies for promoting physical activity. This highlights the importance of public policies in both the political and practical contexts of physical activity promotion in Brazil. However, this interest and development are not reflected in the volume of publications on the topic within the SBAFS community, especially when compared to other themes such as the epidemiology of physical activity, measurement of physical activity, and sedentary behavior. Only 0.7% of the total articles published in the Brazilian Journal of Physical Activity and Health (*Revista Brasileira de Atividade Física e Saúde - RBAFS*) between 2005 and 2013⁴ addressed public policies. A similar trend has been observed in international publications⁵. Scientific evidence across various themes related to physical activity can aid in developing plans and policies to promote physical activity and reduce sedentary behavior. However, the low number of studies on physical activity policies in the Brazilian context presents a challenge to advancing the field in Brazil.

Thus, the aim of this article is to describe the conception, activities, and perspectives of the SBAFS's Working Group on Public Policies and Physical Activity (GTPP).

Mission of the Working Group

In this context, the objectives of the GTPP, in alignment with its role within the SBAFS, are as follows:

- Position SBAFS as a strategic actor in discussions and the development of public policies that promote physical activity in Brazil;
- Collaborate with other stakeholders to advance public policies that promote physical activity in Brazil;

- Encourage the discussion, systematization, and dissemination of knowledge and practices related to public policies for the promotion of physical activity.

Composition of the Working Group

The GTPP was founded by Prof. Dr. Douglas Roque Andrade, and the need for new members is assessed annually, taking into account the presence of researchers at different stages of their careers and gender balance. New members can be included either through a selection process or by invitation to researchers affiliated with SBAFS.

In this context, the continuity of the GTPP's composition has evolved to include researchers in the field who frequently publish on the topic.

During 2022 and 2023, the GTPP held monthly remote meetings on the last Friday of each month. These meetings focused on tracking progress, assessing goal achievements, and planning actions to be developed according to the annual work plan.

Developed activities

In line with its objectives, the GTPP of SBAFS has consistently based its actions on the intention to support, foster, produce, systematize, and disseminate knowledge about physical activity within the context of public policies.

The year of its creation, 2018, was marked by efforts of intersectoral collaboration (notably with the Ministry of Health and the Pan American Health Organization). One of the main objectives was to promote the development of a physical activity guide for the Brazilian population by the Ministry of Health. During this process, Professors Douglas Andrade and Leandro Garcia were invited to organize the GTPP. Among the activities developed was a preliminary consultation aimed at gathering information related to the characteristics and themes that the guide could include. This process involved broad participation from ministries, scientific societies, professional associations, research groups in related fields, the third sector, and civil society. In terms of design and structure, one of the key inspirations was the "Food Guide for the Brazilian Population," also published by the Ministry of Health and recognized for its significance in that field.

The dialogue surrounding the guide extended throughout the 2018/2019 biennium due to its complexity. The process prioritized coordination and meaningful engagement with key stakeholders in pub-

lic policy and physical activity. A fundamental element in crafting this document was ensuring its accessibility to the target audience—users of the Unified Health System (*Sistema Único de Saúde* – SUS) and other members of society. As a result, the GTPP sought to bring this broad discussion to the public by facilitating live online sessions with researchers and experts in public policy and physical activity. Ultimately, valuable insights emerged from the public consultation, which were essential for constructing the Physical Activity Guide for the Brazilian Population⁶. It is worth noting that the GTPP coordinators (2018–2019) served on the scientific committee for the guide.

In the following biennium (2020/2021), the GTPP carried out various actions to effectively implement the concept of "Healthy and Active Cities." In 2020, public live sessions were held to showcase best practices in public policies promoting physical activity in several Brazilian cities, such as the "Programa Academia Carioca" in Rio de Janeiro and the public physical activity policies implemented in Sorocaba, São Paulo, a city renowned for its intersectoral policies, including a cycling infrastructure with more than 100 kilometers of bike lanes. Additionally, the group discussed key findings from the SAFE (Health through Successful Physical Activities) research, which resulted in an important publication for the Ministry of Health⁷.

In terms of collaboration, the 2020/2021 biennium also witnessed notable articulations between SBAFS—through this working group—and organizations focused on active modes of transportation and sustainable cities. Members of the GTPP participated in permanent discussion forums alongside organizations such as "Como Anda," the Center for Studies and Documentation on Healthy Cities (*Centro de Estudos e Documentação em Cidades Saudáveis* – CEPEDOC), UN-Habitat, and the collective "Rede Vidas Ativas," always aiming to provide a systemic view of public policies promoting physical activity.

To advance advocacy efforts, the GTPP drafted a commitment letter for candidates in the 2020 municipal elections, emphasizing the importance of incorporating public policies that promote physical activity into their governmental platforms if elected. Similarly, in the following year, SBAFS, through this working group, co-authored a manifesto advocating for the inclusion of the promotion of physical activity, sports, and healthier, more sustainable, and inclusive cities in the political agenda. Other organizations involved in

this initiative included the Center for Studies of the Physical Fitness Laboratory of São Caetano do Sul (*Centro de Estudos do Laboratório de Aptidão Física de São Caetano do Sul - CELAFISCS*), the Human Development Program through Sports (*Programa de Desenvolvimento Humano pelo Esporte - PRODHE/USP*), Como Anda, and the Sports for Social Change Network (*Rede Esporte pela Mudança Social - REMS*).

In addition to these initiatives, the GTPP organized a significant workshop at the 2021 Brazilian Congress on Physical Activity and Health, titled “How to Address Public Policies with Good Practices in Physical Activity.” The workshop featured invited speakers Prof. Dr. Leonardo Secchi, then President of the Brazilian Society of Public Administration, and Prof. Dr. Casiano Rech, a researcher specializing in the environment and physical activity.

During the 2022/2023 biennium, the focus was on maintaining and expanding intersectoral collaboration with organizations involved in public policies promoting physical activity, as well as launching the online course “Evaluation of Public Policies in the Promotion of Physical Activity,” which had been conceptualized in the previous biennium.

The first initiative, involving collaboration, aimed to enhance political advocacy around urban mobility, with campaigns such as a sustainable mobility initiative during the elections, organized by the Union of Cyclists of Brazil. Members of the GTPP actively participated in debates within the “Rede Vidas Ativas” network, which includes key organizations such as REMS, Como Anda, CELAFISCS, PRODHE, and the National Union of Cyclists of Brazil.

The second initiative involved the structuring, organization, and delivery of the online course “Evaluation of Public Policies in the Promotion of Physical Activity,” which took place in 2023 and was offered to SBAFS members. The course, aimed at equipping professionals in the field, covered the following modules: (1) Evidence-based public health policies; (2) Planning, methods, and tools for public policies; (3) Evaluation of public policies and evidence-based decision-making; (4) Recommendations for the development of physical activity initiatives. The course adopted a practical approach and fostered lively discussions in each session.

In terms of structure, the course included synchronous online meetings for each module, along with the prior distribution of a booklet containing references and practical activities. The course, conducted entire-

ly by GTPP members, had over 70 participants from SBAFS. These participants came from diverse professional backgrounds, including physical education, physiotherapy, administration, and psychology. The majority of participants (59.5%) were female, and most learned about the course via Instagram. Regarding professional affiliations, 43.2% were health students, 41.9% were health professionals, 2.7% were health managers, and 12.2% were from other areas. Notably, 64.9% had prior experience with public health and/or physical activity policies, and nearly half (48.6%) were directly involved in these policies at the time of enrollment.

One of the final outcomes of this course will be the publication of a book in 2024, which will cover the course content and further expand both theoretical and practical knowledge on the topic.

Additionally, the GTPP participated in the XIV Brazilian Congress on Physical Activity and Health, held in Garopaba, Santa Catarina, from October 25 to 28, 2023. This event, organized by SBAFS, is considered one of the leading scientific and educational conferences in the field in Brazil. During the event, the GTPP joined an open meeting with other SBAFS working groups, providing an opportunity to discuss each group’s progress and engage SBAFS members more closely in the execution of GTPP’s work.

Prospects and planning

The activities of the GTPP are paving the way for the development of various outputs in the coming years. One of the planned products includes publishing the material developed by GTPP members to support studies and its use during the course. The goal is to release this content in the form of an e-book through SBAFS, making it freely accessible to anyone interested in the field. Additionally, a series of live discussions on public policies related to physical activity is planned. It is important to note that this year coincides with municipal elections, and the GTPP will intensify its efforts to present letters of intent promoting physical activity to political parties and candidates across the country. This will encourage democratic participation in the development of these public policies and support initiatives in related areas such as leisure, sports, and mobility, among others. Furthermore, in 2024, the GTPP organized a special issue on “Public Policies for Physical Activity” in partnership with the RBAFS.

The actions developed thus far represent a foundation for the sustainability and institutionalization of the

GTPP within SBAFS. Since its inception, the GTPP has worked to strengthen the foundations for collaboration and knowledge sharing, aiming to increase visibility, promote interest in the subject, and disseminate models, methods, and approaches. In this regard, the topic has been consistently incorporated into SBAFS events and platforms (conferences, webinars, and social media), and initial training on the subject has been conducted. Moreover, new young researchers and professionals have joined the working group, indicating promising continuity and sustainability for the theme within SBAFS. However, challenges remain in ensuring the advancement of this field and SBAFS's contribution to physical activity promotion policies in Brazil. The volume and quality of publications on the subject are still insufficient given the importance, scale, and complexity of policy development and implementation in Brazil. The field is inherently multidisciplinary, multicultural, and intersectoral. Therefore, representing the different domains that address physical activity promotion policies, as well as the diversity of identities that comprise the social, ethnic, cultural, and regional fabric that informs and is impacted by these policies, continues to pose significant challenges for the working group.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Author contributions

Sandreschi PF: Conceptualization; Investigation; Data curation; Project administration; Writing - review and editing; Approval of the final manuscript version. Petreça DR: Conceptualization; Investigation; Data curation; Project administration; Writing - review and editing; Approval of the final manuscript version. Alecrim JVC: Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Data presentation design; Writing of the original manuscript; Approval of the final manuscript version. Bernardo D: Conceptualization; Methodology; Investigation; Data presentation design; Writing of the original manuscript; Approval of the final manuscript version. Silva PSC: Conceptualization; Investigation; Data curation; Writing of the original manuscript; Approval of the final manuscript version. Reis RS: Conceptualization; Investigation; Data curation; Supervision; Writing - review and editing; Approval of the final manuscript version. Andrade DR: Conceptualization;

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Declaration regarding the use of artificial intelligence tools in the writing process

The manuscript did not use artificial intelligence tools for its preparation.

Data availability and other materials

The contents are already available.

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