



GOAL: The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) seeks to ensure that fees are not a barrier to program participation.

PROBLEM: It is DPR policy to provide fee reductions to households that meet certain household income limits (linked to the current Section 8 qualification income of limits of between 30% and 80% of the median income for a family of 4 in Arlington). Currently only 10% of DPR’s program participants take advantage of this program. It is unclear whether DPR’s Fee Reduction Program is effective at reaching low income households in Arlington.

There are several questions that the department is left asking:

- Who, what, and where is our target audience?
- Are we reaching all possible customers who could benefit from fee reductions?
- Are there reasons that the fee reduction numbers are such a small part of the DPR population and of the Arlington population as a whole?
- What are the reasons they may not be participating?
- Is there further expansion of the fee reduction program that could be helpful to any populations?

A baseline understanding of our data in comparison to the larger community would enable the department to develop targeted strategies to provide more services to lower income populations in Arlington.

BACKGROUND: When customers register for a program with DPR, we record the names, ages, and address of registrants. Their registrations are then recorded for each household created. Financial-related information is only collected if a family applies for a fee reduction, but no specific financial data is recorded.

Fee reductions are based on the annual assessment of median incomes in connection with Section 8 Housing qualifications. Below is a chart that shows what income level and family sizes guide total fee reductions.

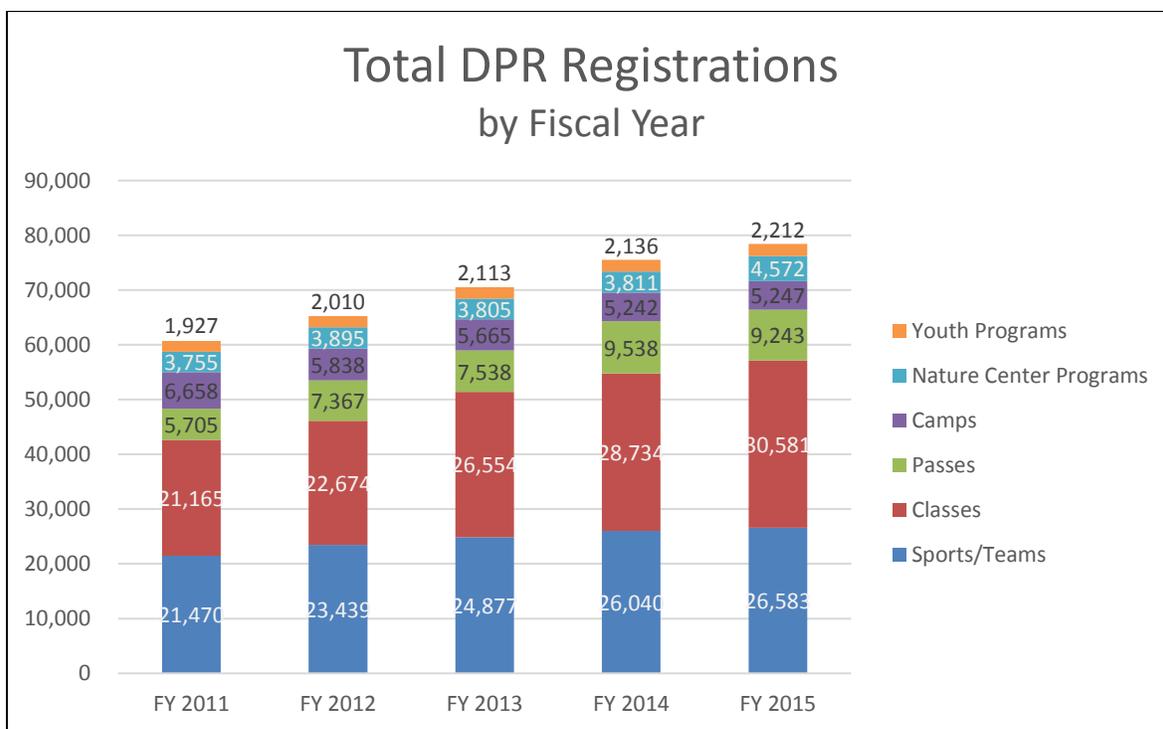
Section 8 Definitions of % of Median Income					Income Limits Effective March 28, 2016			
% Household Pays	Household Size							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8 or More
75% of Fee Sec 8 Low Income (80% Of Median)	\$49,150	\$56,150	\$63,150	\$70,150	\$75,800	\$81,400	\$87,000	\$92,600
50% of Fee Sec 8 Very Low Income (50% of Median)	\$38,050	\$43,450	\$48,900	\$54,300	\$58,650	\$63,000	\$67,350	\$71,700
25% of Fee Sec 8 Ext Low Income (30% of Median)	\$22,850	\$26,100	\$29,350	\$32,600	\$35,250	\$37,850	\$40,450	\$43,050

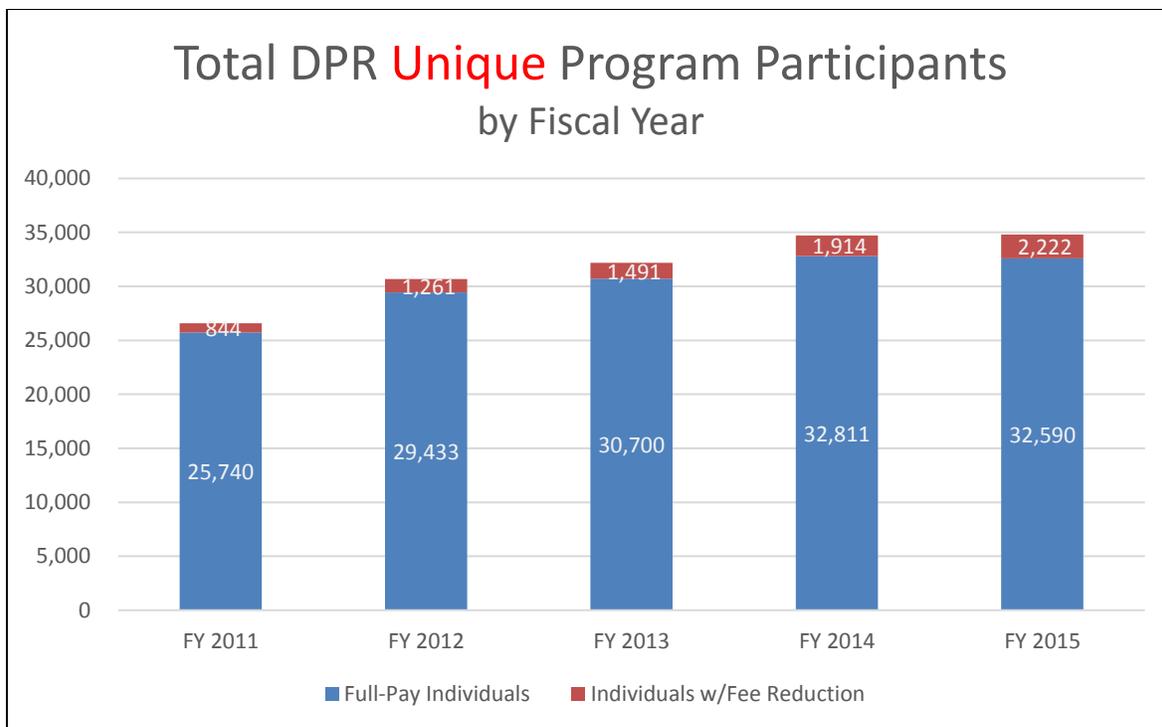
In FY 2015, DPR served 34,812 individuals with 78,438 enrollments in classes, camps, and sports programs. Of those, 2,222 members of qualified households took advantage of income-based fee reductions for a total value of \$692,900. The number of those participating in the fee reduction program has been going up at an average rate of 28% per year over the last five years. More than 2,000 individuals are participating in DPR programs who might not otherwise be able to if fees were a barrier.

The 2,222 individuals taking advantage of fee reductions fit into the income categories listed above and represent less than 10% of all those participating in DPR programs and represent less than 1% of the entire Arlington population.

DPR tracks enrollment data for classes, camps, and programs through a central registration system and tracks individual sports user enrollments in a parallel system. With this large amount of data, there is a story to tell of who DPR is and is not reaching. What can this data tell us, when combined with other data points, about market penetration?

The Department of Parks and Recreation has developed a robust annual schedule of offerings throughout the year. As evidenced by the charts below, registrations and unique program participations has gone up each year for the past five years; however, there has been no major demographic analysis to determine trends or target programs for specific populations.





At the same time, fee reductions have increased in each of these years as well due to outreach and higher touch customer service.

Fee Reductions (Formally Qualified)	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015
Total Households qualified for fee reduction at any point in the fiscal year	1,375	1,656	1,841	2,306	2,098
Members in Qualified Households taking advantage of income-based fee reduction in the fiscal year	844	1,261	1,491	1,914	2,222

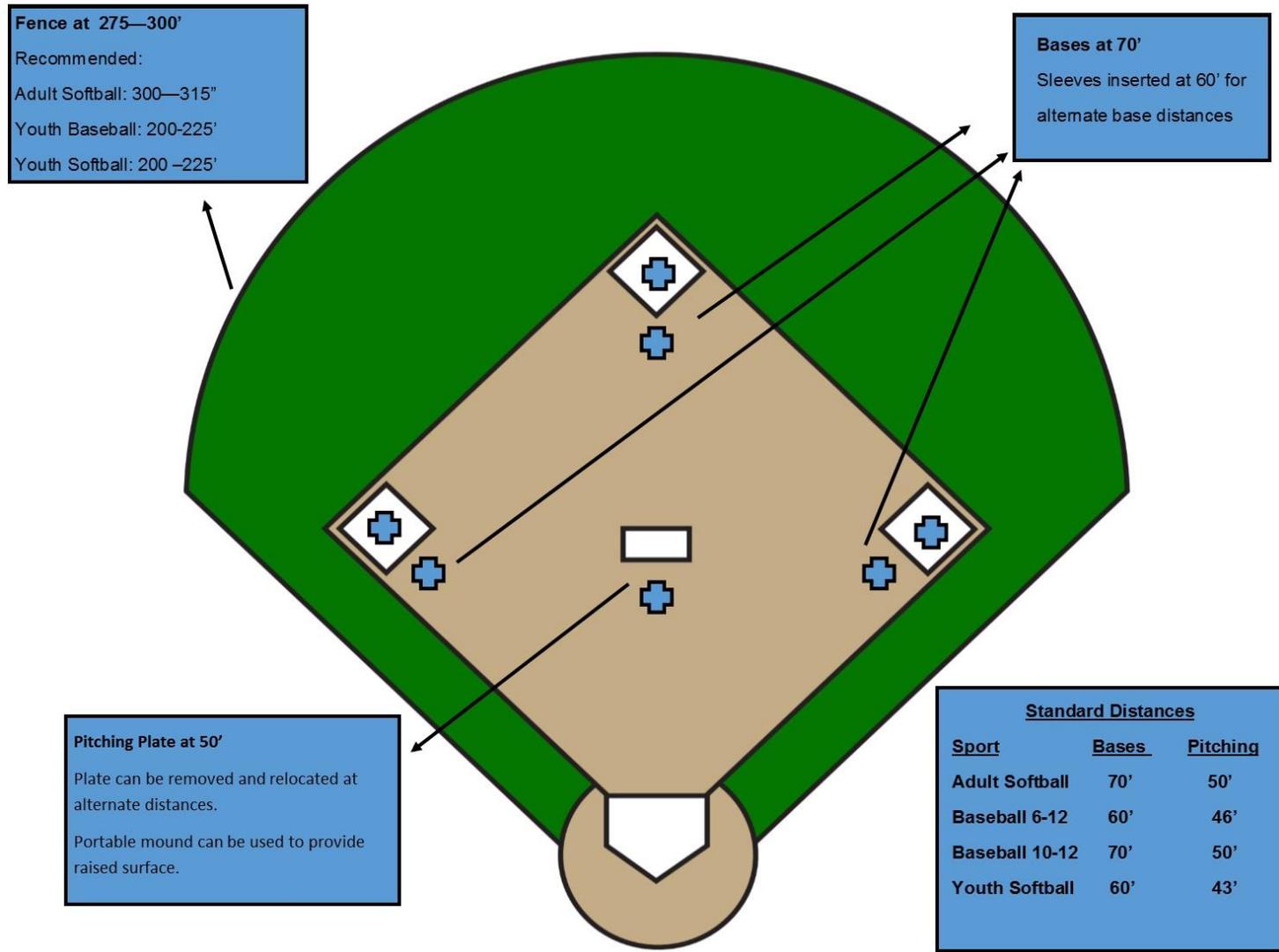
The question remains, however, are we doing enough to reach the Arlington population?

DPR collects self-reported household data on each participant – name, age, address, and associated demographic data. Full address data is available for all registrations for FY 2015 and FY 2016. Prior years may be a mix of some address and some zip code data. Most households maintain their account throughout the years, so it is possible track repeating customers and other related data trends.

Combination Adult/Youth Use of a Diamond Field

- Younger age levels can play on a larger field but older age levels cannot play on a smaller field.
- An adult sized field can be modified to accommodate youth play.
 - Bases sleeves can be installed at various distances
 - Bases placed in appropriate distance sleeves, and unused sleeves are plugged.
 - Pitching plate can be moved and re-staked at appropriate distance
 - If raised mound is desired, a portable mound can be placed on the field

Combination Adult/Youth Use of a Diamond Field



Diamond Field Inventory

Spring	Fall
42	35

Combination Adult/Youth Use of a Diamond Field

- Fence will be larger than recommended, but does not prohibit play.
- Field would not be sanctioned for tournaments outside of local league play.
 - Proposed location not currently used for tournament play
 - Several fields in county do not meet specifications for tournament play

Combination Adult/Youth Use of a Diamond Field

- Practice of using adult sized softball fields for youth baseball/softball is currently taking place at five of seven locations.
 - **Barcroft #4**- adult softball, youth baseball practices/games
 - **Gunston**- adult softball, youth baseball practices, youth softball practices
 - **Jennie Dean #1**- youth baseball practices
 - **Quincy #3**- adult softball, youth baseball practices, youth softball practices
 - **Utah**- adult softball, youth baseball practices/games, youth softball practice
- Previously took place at Tuckahoe Park prior to renovation
- Proposed field at Gunston will accommodate both adult and youth play

Arlington to Convert Gunston Diamond Field to Turf with Sports Foundation Support

April 25, 2017 | *News Release*

- *Arlington Sports Foundation contributes \$180,000 to help pay costs*
- *Conversion to add nearly 880 new possible playing hours*
- *Second synthetic diamond field in Arlington*

A grant from the Arlington Sports Foundation will help the County convert a softball field at Gunston Park to synthetic turf – adding nearly 880 new possible playing hours to the popular field.

The Arlington County Board authorized the County Manager to accept \$180,000 from the Arlington Sports Foundation and use \$190,000 from the Diamond Field Fund to convert the [Gunston Park](#) Diamond Athletic Field #1 to synthetic turf.

“Both the number of people playing sports in Arlington, and the hours our fields are in use continue to grow. We need creative solutions to meet the demand,” County Board Chair Jay Fissette said. “Kudos to the Arlington Sports Foundation and the sports community for helping fund the conversion of Gunston’s field and expand its community use without increasing taxpayer support.”

Saw a need; offered to help

[Gunston Park](#) Diamond Athletic Field #1 was approved for a \$1.433 million capital maintenance project as part of the FY 2016 Pay-As-You-Go budget adoption. As the project came forward during that process, the Arlington Sports Foundation proposed helping the County meet the costs of converting the field from natural grass to synthetic turf to allow for year-round play. The conversion would add nearly 880 new possible playing hours to the field. The Foundation raised \$180,000 of the \$370,000 needed for the conversion. The Arlington Sports Commission recommended allocating \$190,000 from the Arlington County Diamond Field Fund for the project.

The Board voted 5 to 0 to accept the foundation funding, and to use \$190,000 from the County’s Diamond Field Fund to convert the field. To [read the staff report](#) on this item, view the agenda for the April 22, 2016 Regular County Board Meeting. Scroll down to Item No.29.

Background

The County’s Sports Commission considered the Arlington Sports Foundation’s proposed donation in October 2016. The County held a public meeting in November 2016 on the proposal. Both the Sports Commission and a majority of participants at the community meeting expressed support for pursuing the conversion, if the Arlington Sports Foundation could raise the funds to cover the additional expense.

About Arlington’s synthetic turf fields

Arlington uses an infill product in its synthetic turf fields made from ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM), a synthetic rubber manufactured specifically for the purpose of synthetic turf infill. EPDM is already in used in the fields at the Williamsburg/Discovery School campus and Greenbrier Park. The County’s Public Health Division and the Department of Parks and Recreation are actively engaged in ensuring that the County’s synthetic turf fields meet current health standards.

The County continues to monitor research in this area as safety is our prime objective. At the national level, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) continues to study infill made from recycled tires. At this time, all independent studies report that “the preponderance of evidence shows no negative health effects associated with crumb rubber in synthetic turf.”

Sports field conversion

The project, as initially scoped, would have replaced the diamond grass field with a new grass field while bringing it up to current standards. Lighting was to be upgraded, the field was to be made ADA accessible, and stormwater mitigation added along with new furnishings and other amenities.

Next steps will be to update the design for a synthetic turf field and request proposals from vendors for construction.

About the Arlington Sports Foundation

The Arlington Sports Foundation is a non-profit founded in 2009 to enhance opportunities for youth in Arlington to play sports. In March 2014 the County Board adopted the Diamond Field Fund Policy that outlines the process for allocating funds collected through field fund assessments. To learn more about the Diamond Field Fund, visit parks.arlingtonva.us, search Diamond Field Fund.

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Media Contacts

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