Pesticide-Free Playing Fields
Protect the most vulnerable!

Children spend much of the day outdoors at school. When treated with chemical pesticides, playing fields are among the highest sources of toxics exposure for kids.

Children’s brains, bodies, and immunity are still developing. Relative to their body weight, children eat, drink and breathe more than adults. Because of how kids play, such as rolling in the grass and putting things in their mouths, they are exposed to more toxins in the environment. When kids are exposed to pesticides they are at a higher risk for pediatric cancers, decreased cognitive function, and growth and behavioral problems.

High school students also bear an undue burden of school pesticide use. Athletes spend more time and contact with treated fields. Heavy physical activity means deep breathing of toxic chemicals.

More than half of lifetime pesticide exposures happen during the first 5 years of life.¹ Science shows childhood cancer rates rising.⁴
Safe alternatives exist! Many school districts have voted on behalf of children’s health to phase out toxic chemicals in favor of organic lawn management practices. As a result, they have seen a healthier turf and lower maintenance costs.

Outdoor recreation shouldn’t have to be a health hazard!

Of 48 most commonly used pesticides by schools...

- 81% irritate the skin
- 69% are poisonous to nerves
- 69% are linked to kidney and liver damage
- 53% are linked to reproductive harm
- 50% are linked to cancer

At Toxics Action Center, We believe everyone has the right to clean air, clean water and healthy communities. We work side-by-side with communities to prevent or clean up pollution in New England.
Ogunquit, Maine Leads the Way

In 2010, Toxics Action Center conducted a survey of Maine public schools to get a sense of what pesticides children are most exposed to, and what to do about it.

Almost 600 schools were surveyed, and more than half reported their use of pesticides on outdoor landscapes such as playing fields and playgrounds. Most cited aesthetic reasons for using pesticides. Often there were gaps in administrator knowledge of the types of pesticides used, and failure to follow state regulations.

Maine is one of seven states with the ability to pass local pesticide standards more stringent than state restrictions. This presented an opportunity for residents of Ogunquit, Maine to draw up an ordinance to answer to the need for more effective non-toxic land management.

In 2014, Toxics Action Center helped residents of Ogunquit to organize around and pass an ordinance to end pesticide application on all property, public and private.

Now, all school playing fields in Ogunquit are managed with specific practices that include mowing, aeration, irrigation and over-seeding.

The Ogunquit ordinance works to support the natural biology and resilience of turf fields as well as sparing children at play from needless pesticide poisoning.

Building a strong community group is the best way to have your concerns heard.
Work Together to Keep Playing Fields Safe

In your community

➢ Talk to other parents! Forming a strong group to stand against pesticide application is one of the most effective ways to make a difference. Toxics Action Center can help you pull together a group, plan a winning campaign, win a community vote, and more.

➢ Reach out to your Board of Health, School administrators, and the Parks & Recreation Department. Determine the procedure to passing a pesticide ordinance or resolution, and become involved on your town council to see it through.

➢ Meet with decision-makers to identify a champion of your resolution.

State-wide Solutions

➢ Write your state representative and urge them to ban pesticides on school property, town parks and playing fields.

➢ Toxics Action Center can help you network with groups that have seen successful state-wide non-toxics acts through for all of their schools.