In the United States youth sports is a highly popular activity that is assumed to have important physical, psychological and social development consequences for those millions of children and youth involved. Moreover, given the contemporary epidemic of inactivity and obesity in American children, youth sports is thought to play a major role in improving children’s health and welfare for years to come.

Despite these perceived benefits, contemporary youth sports has its critics that see this highly popular children’s activity as plagued by major problems. Concerns have been voiced regarding the highly competitive nature of youth sports and it is often argued that young athletes become injured or burnout as a result of excessive stress and pressure. Still others are thought to learn inappropriate behaviors such as aggression or poor sportspersonship from their involvement.

One problem facing youth sport leaders and policy makers is a lack of understanding relative to the scientific knowledge on children involved in sport and physical activity that has evolved over the last 30 years. Thus, current practices and policies are formed without any contribution from the sport science community. Recognizing this state of the affairs, the Citizenship Through Sport Alliance (CTSA) commissioned the Institute for the Study of Youth Sports at Michigan State University to review the scientific literature on critical issues in youth sports and to write summary white papers on the various topics. These white papers are not intended to be in-depth reviews of the literature in the area. Rather, the charge was to review the literature on selected key issues and identify major findings that could be used to inform CTSA members in forming policies and spearheading projects in this important area. This document is the result of this effort.
Editor's comments - [ With so many youth participating in sports [USA], either in school or agency-sponsored programs, it is important to examine the possible benefits of this involvement. The benefits and detriments of youth sport participation have been a topic of debate within the research and policy literature, however, numerous benefits have been identified. ]

In the text: Cryer (year)