



Afterschool Alliance

Taking the *Afterschool for All Challenge* To Your Community

**Tools and Resources to Continue Your Advocacy
Efforts When You Return Home**



WWW.AFTERSCHOOLALLIANCE.ORG

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Take Action Calendar: 2011 Key Dates and Events

U.S. House of Representatives	Senate	
May 27-30	May 30 - June 3	Memorial Day Recess <i>Invite officials to visit your programs to talk to the children about their jobs and what they do to keep your community safe.</i>
May - September	May - September	Key Vote-Congress Works on Appropriations <i>Call, write and fax your Senators and Representative. Organize the entire community to call and write letters to their Members of Congress asking them to support the proposed increase in afterschool funding.</i>
June 21	June 21	Summer Learning Day <i>Invite district offices to participate in a summer learning day event. See www.summerlearning.org for more information.</i>
July 4-5	July 4 - 8	Independence Day Recess <i>Invite your Members of Congress to visit your program and celebrate Independence Day with your students.</i>
August 8 - September 5	August 8 - September 5	August Recess <i>Meet with your Senators and Representatives in their district offices or invite them to visit your afterschool or summer program.</i>
September - October	September - October	Key Vote - House & Senate Conference on Appropriations Bills, Send to President <i>Call, fax and write to Congress and President Obama! Make sure they hear how important afterschool programs are to kids in your community and across the country!</i>
October 1	October 1	Fiscal year 2012 begins <i>Start a letter-writing campaign to the White House urging an increase in funding for afterschool programs in FY12.</i>
October 20	October 20	11th Annual Lights On Afterschool! Celebration <i>Invite all your elected officials to local Lights On Afterschool events! Let them see how important afterschool programs are to the children and entire community that they represent.</i>
December 8	TBD	Target Adjournment Date



Take Action in Your Community with *Afterschool for All*

Afterschool for All, is a national petition and searchable database designed by the Afterschool Alliance to bring together the diverse individuals and organizations who believe in quality, affordable afterschool programs for all children. **More than 25,000 partners from all 50 states—representing more than 30 million Americans—have joined *Afterschool for All*.**

Use the *Afterschool for All* advocacy toolkit to help grow and strengthen your advocacy efforts for afterschool. Here are just a few of the ways you can build support and raise awareness for afterschool using the *Afterschool for All* advocacy toolkit.

Download the sample invitation letters, emails and afterschool talking points to jumpstart your advocacy outreach with high-level state, city and community stakeholders at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartnerTools.cfm>

Successful partnerships with Mayors:

The National League of Cities made a call to action for more city leaders to join the *Afterschool for All* effort. As a result, we're pleased to report that more than forty city leaders, including several mayors, council members and superintendents signed on to become *Afterschool for All* partners.

Are your city and state leaders represented on the national list of *Afterschool for All* partners? To see whether your mayor, council member, senator or governor has signed on, simply search the *Afterschool for All* database at:
<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartners.cfm>

Use the *Afterschool for All* community petition at your events to help mobilize parents, teachers, youth and community leaders for afterschool. A sample petition is available at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aPartnerPetition.cfm>

Success story from Kansas:

The Kansas Enrichment Network (KEN) hosted a successful community outreach for their state campaign, *Afterschool for All Kansas*, to build awareness among local college students. Marcia Dvorak, Director of the Kansas Enrichment Network, organized a petition drive in a student cafeteria at the Johnson County Community College. Marcia says: "Successes came from venturing away from the booth, clipboards in hand, to the tables and work stations. Little resistance was found among this population. Most of the students had been associated with a program, some had worked in an afterschool environment, and almost all quickly agreed with the need to provide safe places for younger youth."



Help lead state-wide *Afterschool for All* efforts in your community in partnership with your State-wide Afterschool Network. Nine states have partnered with the Afterschool Alliance to launch co-branded state campaigns: *Afterschool for All Kansas, Wyoming, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, New Hampshire, Iowa, South Carolina, Oregon and New Jersey*. These campaigns represent a collective effort by state partners to build awareness and increase support for afterschool in their communities.

Success story from New Jersey:

NJSACC, the network for New Jersey's afterschool communities, launched an effort to collect 10,000 signatures from New Jerseyans who support quality, affordable afterschool programs for all New Jersey children. Advocates in the state have teamed up with *Afterschool for All* to lend a national angle to a state-wide advocacy effort that is already underway, "New Jersey Celebrate Afterschool Outdoors in the Garden State." By partnering with the *Afterschool for All* effort, advocates leveraged the project's national reach and utilized our advocacy tools including a dedicated website with a searchable database, sample petitions, letters, talking points and other materials that can help make the case for greater support for afterschool. They also received ongoing technical assistance from the Afterschool Alliance's national team to help build capacity and increase the number of supporters for afterschool in New Jersey.

Community mobilization is crucial to building support for afterschool with key sectors and stakeholders. Contact the Afterschool Alliance if you would like to launch a state-wide *Afterschool for All* campaign in your state.

Don't be shy about showing your support for afterschool.

- Invite your friends, colleagues and community leaders to join *Afterschool for All*. Sign on at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4aJoin.cfm>
- Display the *Proud Partner of Afterschool for All* web banner on your website.
- Use *Afterschool for All* talking points to make the case for afterschool programs.

***Afterschool for All* tools and resources can be found on the *Afterschool for All* website at: <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/a4a.cfm>.**

Questions, comments? Contact us:

Afterschool for All

1440 Broadway, 16th FL

New York, NY 10018

Tel: 646.943.8662 / Fax: 646.943.8664

info@afterschoolalliance.org



Petition for Afterschool

[date]

[addressee]
[address]

Dear [Elected Official, Candidate for Office]:

The purpose of this petition is to show that I support quality, affordable afterschool programs for all youth who need them and to ask for your help in making more afterschool activities available in **[insert city/district/county]**. Afterschool programs combat juvenile crime, help working families and provide our youth with enriching opportunities to grow into successful adults. Kids in afterschool programs do better in school, and are less likely to get in trouble. However, there are not nearly enough afterschool programs in our communities to serve all of the youth who need them.

I am proud to be part of *Afterschool for All*, a national group of more than 25,000 individuals and organizations representing more than 30 million Americans who believe in the importance of afterschool programs for our communities. *Afterschool for All* partners include governors, mayors, police chiefs, prosecutors, colleges and universities, parents, educators, youths and advocates as well as prominent organizations representing a broad array of sectors including the YMCA of the USA, the NAACP, the National Council of La Raza, the National PTA, the National League of Cities, AARP, Time Warner, IBM, the NBA, NFL, MLB and the NHL.

**Please print your name, zip code, city, email and sign your signature below.
SIGN ONLY ONCE.**

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Petition for Afterschool

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TIP SHEET & SAMPLE MATERIALS: Organizing a Site Visit for a Policy Maker

Inviting policy makers and their staff to visit your afterschool program is a powerful way to help them understand the benefits your program provides to the community. Below are suggested steps, a timeline and a sample schedule for your event, as well as a sample invitation and thank you letter. Consult the Key Dates to see when your Members of Congress will be back in your community.

Step 1: Find the home district address and phone number for your elected officials. Visit the Afterschool Alliance website, www.afterschoolalliance.org, and look for the Contact Congress box on the right side of the homepage. Enter your zip code to access contact information for your law makers. (You can also visit www.senate.gov or www.house.gov to find this information.) Most Senators and some Representatives have more than one district office. Select the office closest to you. If you do not have access to the Internet, look in the blue government pages of your local phone book.

Step 2: Identify a few dates during the next Congressional recess when you could host a visit to your program. Using the date that is most optimal for you, write an invitation letter based on the sample provided in this packet. Have the letter on hand when you call the district office.

Step 3: Call the district office. Tell the person who answers that you would like to schedule a visit to your afterschool program for the Senator or Representative. You may be connected with a legislative aide or a scheduler.

Try for the top. Ask if the law maker can visit during the next Congressional recess. Provide options for dates and times if your first choice does not work. Be sure to mention that staff and parents will be on hand for the visit and offer to invite media as well. Point out how your program relates to the policy maker's interests (literacy, improving academic achievement in public schools, keeping communities safe by decreasing juvenile crime, helping families, etc.). Offer to re-send your "Invite Letter" and more information about the program and who will be at the visit. Encourage the policy maker to bring staff members.

Be flexible. If the law maker is not available, ask whether a senior staff person can visit instead. Even if the law maker agrees to come, keep in mind that elected officials' schedules can change with little notice. Several days before the visit, call to confirm the event and be prepared to reschedule.

Mail or fax your personalized invitation letter (sample here). Be sure to send along a program profile, brochure and background materials about your program.

Step 4: Before the visit. Identify youth, parents, program staff, school officials and community partners who would be convincing spokespeople for your program. Ask them to be available for the visit and give them background material on the policy maker, so they will feel comfortable at the event. Share the basic schedule for the visit and clarify their roles. Make sure to invite key partners, supporters, your school's principal and even school board members. Send a media advisory to invite press and prepare a press release for the day of the event. (Go to Program Tools, Media or the *Lights On Afterschool* area of www.afterschoolalliance.org for tips and samples.)

Step 5: The visit. On the day of the visit, have someone wait outside the building to greet and direct the visitors to the right location. Be sure to have program brochures or a program profile on hand. You may want to make copies of any articles, youth essays, parent letters, awards or other documents that demonstrate community support for your program. Be sure the policy maker gets to hear from the young people at your program. Let him/her ask questions of the students or facilitate a discussion to

get their perspectives on afterschool and what they gain from the program. Other ideas: ask parents to share their perspectives; ask a principal to talk about the ways the program affects students; ask a police officer, youth counselor, pediatrician or health leader to talk about the benefits to youth who attend it; invite community members to comment on how the program keeps kids out of trouble. Often elected officials are interested in documenting their visit with a photo - think through some possible photo opportunities before hand and suggest them to accompanying staff. If children will be any pictures, be sure you have signed parental release forms.

At some point during the visit, perhaps early on and then again near the end of the visit, consider identifying an “ask” that you would like to make to the Member of Congress. Examples include asking for the Member of Congress to support increased funding for the 21st CCLC during the appropriations process; or asking him or her to cosponsor legislation such as bills to support older youth programs or those in rural areas; or asking him or her to support funding for science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education in afterschool programs.

Sample Schedule

3:00 p.m.	Policy maker and staff arrive and are greeted by the program director or other lead host.
3:05-3:15 p.m.	Lead the policy maker and staff on a tour. Let them see the youth activities.
3:15-3:30 p.m.	Afterschool snack/meal time! Let the policy maker enjoy a snack or meal and talk with the children about their favorite parts of the program. Ask the kids where they would be if they did not attend afterschool or what their friends outside the program do after school.
3:30-3:45 p.m.	After the snack, facilitate a discussion between parents and the policy maker. Ask the parents to explain how the afterschool program helps their families.
3:45-4:00 p.m.	Ask your invited guest (principal or superintendent, police officer, youth counselor, etc) to talk about the benefits they see the program offering youth.
4:00 p.m.	Thank you and goodbye!

Step 6: Send a Thank You letter. See the “Sample Thank You Letter” in this packet.

Planning Timeline

Work backward from the date of the policy maker visit to make sure you are well-prepared. Use the suggested timeline below as a tool to help you plan. Allow at least one month between the invitation and the actual visit to be sure you have enough time to coordinate guests and schedules.

Time Prior to Visit	Task
1 month	Invite policy maker
3 weeks	Invite parents, community members, school officials, youth
2 weeks	Develop schedule for the day; identify roles
1 week	Finalize program agenda
3 days	Call policy maker’s office to confirm visit
2 days	Invite the media (see Program Tools at www.afterschoolalliance.org for sample media advisory and other materials)

Sample Invitation Letter to Send Your Member of Congress

[Your Program Letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable Ruth Smith
500 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

I would like to invite you and your staff to visit the **[Bright Lights Afterschool Program]** during your next district working session. Our program provides 300 middle school children with safe, educational afterschool activities during the critical hours from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., when many parents are still working and juvenile crime rates triple. Students in our program are not only safe; they are doing better in school, and show more interest in learning.

We would like to take you on a short tour of our program on **[date]** at **[time]**. If that time is not convenient, we would be happy to work with you to find a time that is. I have also invited members of the local **[Rotary Club]** and several parents to attend. They are eager to talk with you about the importance of keeping afterschool programs open and making these programs available to more children.

I hope you will join us and see our program, and our students, in action. Afterschool programs such as ours are important because they inspire students to learn, keep kids safe and help working families. The **[Bright Lights]** community relies on us.

A profile of the **[Bright Lights Afterschool Program]** is enclosed for your reference. I will contact your office within the next two weeks to follow up. I look forward to seeing you on **[date]**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Phone Number]
[E-mail Address]



Sample Thank You Letter to Send to Your Member of Congress

NOTE: A copy of this letter should also be sent to the district office. It is also a good idea to thank staff members who joined the policy maker on the visit to help further your relationship with the office.

[Your Program Letterhead]

[Date]

The Honorable Ruth Smith
500 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Smith:

Thank you for taking the time to tour our **[Bright Lights Afterschool Program]** during your recent district working session. The youth, parents and program staff enjoyed meeting you tremendously, and we were delighted to have the chance to share our activities with you.

I hope your visit helped reinforce how much our community values this program. As we discussed, and as I have witnessed firsthand, afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire learning and help working families.

I look forward to meeting with you again to further discuss the ways in which we can work together to ensure that afterschool programs stay open and are available to more children in our community and our state. Thank you again for taking the time to visit!

Sincerely,

[Your Name]
[Phone Number]
[E-mail Address]



Take Action Success Stories: T\fyY Site Visits & A Legislative Breakfast

Nurturing Relationships with Local Officials Boys & Girls Clubs of East Los Angeles

What: Multiple visits to Anna Araujo’s Boys & Girls Club (BGC) afterschool site by local elected officials and their staff.

Goal: To develop a climate of support among local elected officials for afterschool programs in general, and the Boys & Girls Club in particular.

Results: Araujo reports that stronger relationships with elected officials are responsible for increased support and resources for her program. Her access makes it possible to make specific requests – for new equipment or discretionary funding, for example – to staff and officials.

How it was done: Araujo has worked hard for several years to develop consistent relationships with local elected officials and their staff members. Among these is

a member of the county board of supervisors with jurisdiction over her area. Araujo inherited a less than ideal relationship with the supervisor, owing to staff problems at the Boys & Girls Club that occurred before she arrived. But with consistent efforts to keep elected officials informed about Club activities, make the Club available to them for visits and photo opportunities, and provide officials with ready access to groups of children for various media-friendly events, she has turned the relationships around. Araujo has focused attention not just on the officials themselves, but on their key aides – field representatives and schedulers.

It’s important to be in touch with local elected officials and staff even when you’re not asking them for something. If I have an event that I think will allow an official to shine, I make sure their field representative knows about it, and knows their boss is welcome to stop by and say a few words.

- Anna Araujo

Lessons Learned:

- **Nurturing relationships with officials’ key staff members pays off.** They are often the ones to decide whether and where the official will appear, and they play important roles in policy making as well. So she maintains regular contact with aides, sending personal emails, newsletters, annual reports, and individual thank-you gifts (art from students, for example) after visits.
- **Help elected officials’ staff envision a successful visit** by their boss. When staff members visit, Araujo tries to make it easy for them to visualize a successful and media-friendly visit from the elected official. She distributes t-shirts to students, takes staff to see photogenic activities, shows them a stage area where presentations could be made, etc.
- **Extend the network of contacts.** Araujo finds that staff turnover can be high with elected officials, but that the same people turn up in new jobs with different officials – thus extending her network of contacts.
- **Invite elected officials or their staff members to sit on event-planning committees.** Araujo says that by involving officials, they become more invested in program activities – even if they don’t actually participate in the planning process.



- **Let officials and their aids know that your students are available for events.** Araujo is often asked by officials for help in gathering a crowd of children for various announcements or ceremonies. She works hard to be responsive to those requests, giving her children exposure to the political process while helping nurture relationships with important officials.
- **Be straightforward in describing your program and your event.** When inviting officials to come to an event, Araujo is careful not to overstate expected turnout or otherwise “over-hype” the event. Officials and staff understandably want to know what to expect, and unpleasant surprises can sour a relationship.

Nurturing Relationships with Congressional Education Staff Stepping Stones and Student Adventures, Iowa Public Schools

What: Two aides to Sen. Tom Harkin visited the Stepping Stones afterschool program at Eisenhower Elementary School in Davenport, Iowa. The visit was coordinated jointly by the afterschool directors of Student Adventures (Clinton, Iowa) and Stepping Stones.

Goals: To nurture strong relationships with Congressional staff and to inform them about important issues affecting afterschool programming; to showcase the importance and effectiveness of afterschool programs as an extended learning opportunity for young people.

Results: This meeting helped to solidify the relationship between a local afterschool program and their senator's office. The afterschool staff communicated their support for quality extended learning opportunities by showcasing the multifaceted, comprehensive programming offered, which includes academic support, enrichment and recreation.

How it was done: Two Harkin staff members met with two Stepping Stones representatives. The staffers had the opportunity to both observe children in the program and to talk with staff, students and parents about the importance of afterschool. Afterschool staff provided a packet of materials for the Congressional aides, including data from the America After 3PM report and evaluation data from 21st Century Community Learning Center (CCLC) Programs in Iowa. The issues emphasized by afterschool staff included:

(1) The importance of 21st CCLC funding and the positive impact it has had on children and families, including support for working families, children's safety and academic gains;

"Effective advocacy is a fundamental component of any community's sustainability plan for afterschool programming. Building an informed relationship with local, state and federal legislators connects your program with a broad, nationwide alliance of afterschool advocates, and also connects your legislators with their constituents in a meaningful way." - **John Border, Director of Stepping Stones**

"I would strongly recommend for ALL advocates of afterschool programs to stay in regular communication with your elected representatives, on all levels: state, national and local. Be sure to also invite them to see your programs in action so they can see for themselves what afterschool programs are all about. It can—and does—make a difference." - **Loras Osterhaus, Director of Student Adventures**

(2) The tremendous demand for programs in Iowa as well as data demonstrating program effectiveness;

(3) The wealth of data on afterschool program effectiveness, and the importance of including the best of afterschool in any school reform model and

(4) The variety of activities that children are involved in, including hands on learning, wellness, academics, arts, technology, etc.

Lessons Learned:

- **Develop strong relationships with Congressional staff.** In particular, cultivate relationships with education



Afterschool Alliance

staffers; they play a critical role in drafting legislation and determining which legislation their Member of Congress will support.

- **Encourage Members of Congress and Congressional staff to experience your program first-hand through site visits.** Words are no substitute for experiencing directly the opportunities offered to children in afterschool programs.
- **Emphasize community involvement, diversity of funding sources and various partnerships your program may have.** Policy makers are more willing to support programs that are already supported by their communities, recognized by others and engaged in creative partnerships.
- **Emphasize strengths of your program that overlap with national initiatives and the Member of Congress's particular areas of interest.** When speaking with Harkin's aides, the program directors emphasized the health and wellness benefits of a balanced, high quality afterschool experience and its impact on childhood obesity. Sen. Harkin has a long record of supporting health and wellness initiatives for children, so it was especially important to make this connection.
- **Follow up: continue partnerships with policy makers to advocate for quality programs that promote health and learning before school, after school and during the summer.**



Planning a Visit from a Member of Congress Dream Team Action Clubs, St. Mary's County, Maryland Public Schools

What: A tour of an afterschool program by U.S. Representative Steny Hoyer, House Majority Leader and senior member of the Appropriations Committee. The Representative stayed for two full hours at the Lexington Park Elementary School program in St. Mary's County, Maryland, where he toured the program, met with children and staff, made a speech, and talked with media.

Goal: To buttress Representative Hoyer's already solid support for afterschool programs, to encourage him to take even stronger leadership in support of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, and to increase local visibility of afterschool issues. Hoyer's office had requested that the Maryland State Department of Education arrange a visit to a site in St. Mary's County, one of five counties in his district.

Results: The event earned considerable local media attention, including a story in the *Washington Post*, and helped solidify the relationship between the local afterschool program and the Representative's office.

How it was done: Smith worked for several weeks to iron out every detail of the Representative's visit, including contingency plans for what to do if the Representative arrived late, if other speakers spoke too long, etc. In fact, the visit had to be delayed several weeks when a snowstorm closed school. Smith invited a number of local officials, including school board members, to join in the visit. Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant attended as well.

We worked hard to make sure we showed off all the good things about afterschool. Because of Representative Hoyer's leadership role, we knew his visit could have national influence. And it certainly had a great effect locally, with afterschool suddenly becoming a hot topic and lots of powerful people looking at how we can find continued funding.

-Mark Smith

Lessons Learned:

- **Remember that other officials or allies who attend an event with a Member of Congress will often have an interest in talking to the Member about non-afterschool issues.** So make sure you're able to keep the visit focused on your issues.
- **Be flexible.** Smith had to reschedule the event because of a snowstorm. And despite ample planning and coordination with Representative Hoyer's staff, the Representative spoke earlier and stayed longer than expected. Flexibility matters.
- **Be sure to have a camera handy,** along with an experienced photographer to operate it.
- **Connect with the staff of the visitor.** Smith had many phone and email conversations with Representative Hoyer's legislative assistant in charge of education issues to plan details of the visit. In the process, he briefed the staffer about afterschool programs, providing information on afterschool that she ended up using in news releases. Smith plans to build on the relationship with future events.
- **Bone up on your afterschool facts so that you'll be ready to answer detailed questions about the program** – how many children, how much money, etc.
- **Assign someone the task of working with journalists who attend,** getting their contact information, and helping make sure they have what they need to file their stories.

Pennsylvania Area Council of Boys & Girls Clubs Recognize “Youth of the Year” at a Legislative Breakfast

What: The Pennsylvania Area Council of Boys & Girls Clubs held an award ceremony/legislative breakfast to reward local “Youth of the Year” candidates and announce the selection of the “Pennsylvania Youth of the Year.”

Goal: The event showcased the youth to legislators to demonstrate the value of Boys & Girls Club (BGCA) programming to garner state budget support for Boys & Girls Club programs.

Results: Over the past four years, the statewide Boys & Girls Club movement and its programs have received recognition from the educational establishment of the state, removed administrative unwillingness to support club budgetary initiatives and have increased state funding to \$1.35 million.

“[Boys & Girls Clubs] have provided me with a safe place to learn and grow; ongoing relationships with caring adult professionals; life-enhancing programs; character development experiences and hope and opportunity.” -**Nick Khan, 2009-10 Pennsylvania Youth of the Year**

How it was done: The Legislative Breakfast initiative has been a regular part of the state “Youth of the Year” program for the past four years with an ever increasing number of state legislators and administrative officials participating and/or attending the event. Invitations to the breakfast are sent out two months prior to the event with follow-up phone calls. Other personal contacts are made by the local Club executive staff and or Board members to their local Representatives and Senators. Specific and influential legislators and Administrative officials are selected to serve as hosts of the event and participate as speakers and/or presenters at the event. In the past four years the following people served in various capacities at the breakfast: Senate and House Appropriation chairs; chairs of the House and Senate Education committees; the Secretary of Education; and the Lt. Governor.

Lessons Learned:

- **Develop and/or nurture existing relationships between local club staff, board of directors and local legislators.** This builds a strong grassroots network that can be useful in critical times as legislators are pressed to cut state budgets in order to meet budgetary requirements. Strong local support will make a difference as to whether your budgetary requests are either reduced or eliminated or are championed by your local legislators.
- **Develop a strong relationship at the state level with Administration officials and staff.** Relationships provide the opportunity to demonstrate the value of your afterschool program and possibly, reduce any opposition to your efforts by state leaders.

- **Develop a strong and active role within the educational establishment of the state.** Work with other non-Administration groups to find common ground and present a unified non-competitive image to the Administration and the Legislature.
- **Develop a strong and working relationship, at the state-level, with Legislative staff.** This will increase the access to Legislators for their participation and/or attendance at the Legislative Breakfast and encourage them to champion the afterschool cause.
- **Encourage local “Youth of the Year” winners to offer their assistance to local Legislators in serving as tour guides for their constituents and as possible youth voices in any town meeting or panel discussions that the local Legislator may want to sponsor.**
- **Encourage local Legislators to publicly recognize their local “Youth of the Year” winners through Legislative Resolutions and other awards.** This provides local Legislators with “feel good” opportunities within their local districts and further encourages them to become part of the local family of supporters.

Afterschool advocates have many ways to generate news coverage about the challenges afterschool programs face, particularly during the current wave of budget cuts and funding shortfalls most programs are experiencing. Following are ideas, along with some how-to information, for getting out your messages about afterschool. At a minimum, consider sending out a news release and/or a letter-to-the-editor about your visit to Washington, D.C. But you'll also find in this packet other ways to generate media coverage. Contained here are tips and sample materials to help you:

- » **Send a Letter-to-the-Editor of Your Local Newspaper(s) (a template is included on the flash drive);**
- » **Send a News Release about Your Trip to Washington, D.C. (a template is included on the flash drive);**
- » **Pitch Yourself to a Local Radio Talk Show (a template is included on the flash drive);**
- » ***Write an Opinion Article (Op-Ed) for Your Local Newspaper;***
- » ***Look for a Local Cable Television Interview Opportunity;***
- » ***Talk with the Relevant Editorial Writer(s) of Your Local Newspaper; and***
- » **Write a Blog Post on Your Trip for Your School District's or Another Blog.**

Messages That Work

The Afterschool Alliance recommends using the following messages with the media:

- Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.
- Research from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by jcpenney and released in 2009, found that 15.1 million K-12 children are unsupervised in the afternoons. That includes 3.7 million middle school students and 1.1 million elementary school children. By contrast, just 8.4 million children are in afterschool programs, while the parents of another 18.5 million children say their children would participate if an afterschool program were available.
- The recession has taken a harsh toll on afterschool programs, with many programs cutting back hours and some forced to close altogether.
- The President's budget proposal for FY2012 would increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative (21st CCLC) by \$100 million, which would help provide afterschool for another 100,000 children across the nation. He has also requested an additional \$1.3 billion for the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), about a third of which would be used to provide services for school-age children. His proposals for 21st CCLC and CCDF deserve support.
- In addition to the budget, Congress is expected to take up reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (formerly the *No Child Left Behind Act*). When it does, it should make sure that 21st CCLC funds are used to support quality afterschool, before-school and summer learning programs that enhance and complement the school day through engaging, hands-on, experiential learning activities. The bill should also build on strong partnerships between schools and community-based organizations, and it should ensure that any changes to 21st CCLC do not reduce the number of children or communities served, and that the bill maintains the current formula for grants to states that then distribute funds to local communities.
- Afterschool programs are about the future. Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) programs offered after school and during the summer are getting young people excited about studying these important fields. The hands-on, experiential learning that is a trademark of afterschool programs lends itself naturally to the scientific method and STEM subjects. In an era of

global competitiveness, STEM afterschool offers an exciting way to ensure we have the workforce we need tomorrow.

- America needs more quality afterschool programs. We need lawmakers, businesses and foundations to come together to ensure that afterschool programs get the funding they need to serve our children and our communities.

Send a Letter-to-the-Editor to Your Local Newspaper(s) (See specific file included)

Send a News Release about Your Trip to Washington, D.C. (See specific file included)

Pitch Yourself to a Local Radio Talk Show (See specific file included)

Write an Opinion Article for Your Local Newspaper

Opinion articles (also called “op-eds” or guest editorials) are a great way to get your message out. Start by doing some research on your newspaper’s opinion page. Check every day for several days to see if the paper runs opinion articles from members of the community. Some newspapers only carry staff-written or syndicated columnists, but most publish some pieces from readers. If your paper accepts opinion articles, call and ask for the opinion page editor, and say you’re interested in writing an op-ed on the funding challenges afterschool programs in the community are facing and what it means to local families. Ask if such a piece might be of interest to the newspaper. The editor won’t likely make a commitment on the phone, but might indicate a willingness to look at such a piece, and even offer suggestions on what might make it most publishable. Then ask what the procedure is - how long the piece can be, who to submit it to and how, and any other guidelines the paper observes. Write it, submit it per the newspaper’s instructions and then call the next day to be sure it arrived.

Here are four tips for writing an op-ed piece:

- First, never exceed the word limit.
- Second, because it’s an opinion article, write with a point of view but without being shrill.
- Third, back up what you say with real facts. Tell real stories.
- Fourth, start with a lead paragraph that captures the reader’s attention, and gives a sense of where you’re headed. For example: “Every weekday afternoon in Little Rock, more than 9,000 students stay after the final bell - not as punishment, but as part of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers’ afterschool program. The program keeps them safe, inspires them to learn and relieves their parents of child care worries. But with funding lagging so far behind community needs, many of our children have no safe, adult-supervised place to go in the afternoon.”

If you are not successful placing your op-ed piece in your community’s major daily newspaper, consider community papers (often weeklies), or look for a website or blog (the school system, an ally, your own program) that will publish it.

Look for a Local Broadcast or Cable Television Interview Opportunity

Broadcast and cable television programming varies from market to market, so there are no firm rules about what kinds of local interview opportunities may be available to you. But, at a minimum, many broadcast stations run public affairs programs, and most cable systems have a channel devoted to local government or a local school system. Look through the listings of your local cable system to see what’s possible in your community, and then send a pitch letter (like the radio letter provided on this flash drive). Particularly for TV, offer to bring several children from your program.

Talk with the Editorial Writer(s) of Your Local Newspaper

There's nothing quite like having an editorial on your side to help generate support from policy makers. Editorial writers are always looking for topics, so if you think your newspaper's general editorial disposition might favor full or increased funding for afterschool, see if you can convince the editorial page editor to write an editorial saying so.

First, call the newspaper, ask for the editorial page, and ask who writes editorials on local education issues. Depending on the size of the paper, it could be the editorial page editor, a columnist or even a reporter.

Ask to be connected with that person, and then request a meeting to talk about the funding challenges facing state and local afterschool programs. If s/he agrees to meet, bring whatever fact sheets or other material you may have, as well as information on the impact of budget shortfalls. Be sure to check the Afterschool Alliance's website at www.afterschoolalliance.org for the latest information.

Be prepared to explain in specific terms the threat to local programs, what inadequate funding would mean for children and families, and how many would likely be affected if the federal government cuts afterschool funding next year.

Remember, the writer will be thinking in terms of how he or she might write an editorial, so be sure to provide a local angle (that should be easy!) and specific facts that support your case.

Send a Letter-to-the-Editor to Your Local Newspaper(s)

Look at your newspaper's letters page. Scan the page itself, and the newspaper's website letters section, for instructions on word counts and where to send your letter. If you can't find instructions, just count the number of words in a given day's letters. Also, see whether published letters all refer to stories or editorials the newspaper recently ran; some newspapers insist on it, some don't. Then write a letter that reflects what you've learned—length, tone, keyed to a story already published in the newspaper or not, etc.

Be sure your letter says that:

- Afterschool is the key to inspiring students to learn, keeping them safe and helping working families.
- Afterschool programs face severe funding shortfalls that are forcing many to cut back their services to kids and families, and others to close their doors altogether.
- It's important that the federal budget sustain and increase current funding for afterschool programs.

Follow the newspaper's instructions on how to submit the letter, and be sure to include a phone number (not for publication), where the paper can call to confirm that it's actually from you!

You'll find a sample fill-in-the-blanks letter-to-the-editor following this document that's keyed to your trip to Washington, D.C. The Afterschool Alliance urges you to modify the text of the letter, so that if the newspaper asks if the letter is being submitted to other papers around the nation, you can honestly answer that it is unique. Newspapers are increasingly sensitive to that issue.

Sample Letter-to-the-Editor

[May 18], 2011

Letters-to-the-Editor

[Name of newspaper]

[Address]

[City, state, zip]

To the Editor:

Every afternoon in the United States, millions of children leave school with no organized activity or adult supervision awaiting them. Not surprisingly, the afternoon hours are when children are most likely to be the victims of crime and to engage in risky behaviors.

Afterschool programs provide a safe alternative. And that's one of many reasons why we need quality afterschool programs - many more than we already have. Recent research from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by jcpenny, reveals that the parents of 18.5 million children not already in afterschool programs say they would sign their kids up if a program were available. Unfortunately, the economy has made it harder for afterschool programs to raise private funds, and local, state, and federal budget cuts are forcing many programs to cut back their programs or close their doors.

Last week I was proud to join hundreds of afterschool supporters in Washington, D.C., at the Afterschool Alliance's *Afterschool for All Challenge*. We met with Members of Congress and their aides to discuss the urgent need to fund afterschool programs. We'll all be better off if lawmakers heed that message.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your program]

[Your phone numbers, not for publication]

Send a News Release About Your Trip to Washington, D.C.

Many advocates find that local newspapers, television, or radio stations are interested in doing stories on their trip to Washington, D.C., to attend the *Afterschool for All Challenge*. So on the trip home, fill in the blanks of the news release that follows. Then distribute it to local media as soon as you can. (Don't let the release grow stale in a clearance process. It won't be news if it's three days old.)

In filling in the blanks of the news release, make certain that you fairly characterize what your Representatives, Senators or their aides said in your meetings. For example, if an aide said the Member of Congress would support increasing the 21st Century Community Learning Center (21st CCLC) afterschool appropriation, but didn't say to what level, be sure not to suggest an amount.

Send the news release to:

- Assignment desks of local TV and radio stations;
- Local education reporter(s) at daily newspaper(s);
- Assignment desks (or education reporters) of any community, ethnic or specialty newspapers;
- The newsletter editor for interested organizations - the school system, the PTA, the Boys & Girls Club, the YMCA and others; and
- School system and community cable stations.

Don't overlook ethnic or other specialty outlets. Adjust the quote in the news release as you see fit, and be sure to mention in your quote any commitments from lawmakers or their aides - just be sure not to overstate what they told you!

If anyone in your traveling party maintains a blog or has posting privileges on one, you might consider arranging for an entry about the trip (see sample blog post in this packet).



[Program Letterhead]

News Release
[May 18, 2011]

Contact: [Name]
[Phone]

[Your City] Leaders Say Congressional Meetings Provided Valuable Chance to Discuss How Afterschool Programs Help Kids, Families

'Breakfast of Champions' & Congressional Meetings Send Clear Message: Afterschool Kids Need More Federal Support

Afterschool supporters from [city or state] returned home today after a two-day visit to Washington, D.C., where they met with Members of Congress, including [list any Senators or Representatives from your state who attended the Breakfast or met with your group], to discuss the unmet need for more funding for afterschool programs. The visit was part of the 10th annual *Afterschool for All Challenge*, sponsored by the Afterschool Alliance.

[Your name,] [your title] of [your organization,] declared the visit an “extraordinary opportunity to remind lawmakers of the many ways afterschool programs help children and families in our community.” Joining [last name] on the trip were [name other local participants including their role and their organizational affiliation].

A highlight of the conference was a day-long visit to Capitol Hill, during which afterschool leaders met with hundreds of Members of Congress and their aides. The day began with the annual “Breakfast of Champions,” honoring afterschool leaders and supporters, including Members of Congress. Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway and founder of FIRST Robotics was honored for his work to promote science and engineering through afterschool programs. Other speakers at the *Challenge* included Robin Schepper of First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move!* Initiative and Kumar Garg, Policy Analyst, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President. [Insert information on anyone from your state who was honored or participated in the program. Or make note of any locally recognizable speakers.] [City or state] conference participants met with [names of Senators, followed by names of Representatives,] as well as aides to [Senators followed by Representatives].

“Afterschool programs are facing serious funding challenges,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Members of Congress need to hear from their constituents about the outstanding work afterschool programs are doing across their districts and states. That’s the best way to remind them of the need to keep these programs going, and to grow the federal contribution to afterschool. Our advocates sent a loud and clear message this week, one we think will be impossible to ignore.”

The goals of the visit were to educate lawmakers about the unmet need for afterschool programs as they set priorities for federal funding and prepare to reauthorize the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, formerly *No Child Left Behind*.

In [name of community], a federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant supports the [name of afterschool program], but other worthy applicants were turned down because there were not enough funds available. The Afterschool Alliance is urging Congress to support funding for afterschool programs.

“The *Afterschool for All Challenge* was a great experience,” said [name and title]. “I’m lucky to be able to see every day the difference afterschool programs make in kids’ lives, keeping them safe, inspiring them to learn, and helping working families. I wanted to share that experience with

lawmakers, and I think we made an impression on them. [Senator/Representative] said [s/he] would [support funding for afterschool, and we were very glad to hear it OR consider our request, and we’re hopeful he/she will conclude that the enormous benefits from afterschool programs are worth the modest investment.] Without secure federal funding, afterschool programs and the children and families they serve will suffer.”

According to the Afterschool Alliance’s 2009 [America After 3PM](#) report, a nationwide household survey on afterschool, sponsored by jcpenny:

- 15.1 million K-12 children are unsupervised in the afternoons, including 3.7 million middle school students and 1.1 million elementary school children.
- By contrast, just 8.4 million children are in afterschool programs.
- The parents of another 18.5 million children say they would enroll their children in an afterschool program if one were available.

[You can replace or supplement the data above with numbers from your state’s America After 3PM news release, available on the Afterschool Alliance website, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM.cfm>.]

[Add local information about afterschool in your community - some combination of information about your program, local funding challenges, major providers, local evaluations of programs, etc.]

The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.

[Add a one- or two-sentence description of your program.]

#

NOTE: For more information about afterschool, including *America After 3PM*, or other research data, visit www.afterschoolalliance.org or call Gretchen Wright or Johanna Diaz at 202/371-1999. For more information on the trip, contact [name and phone number].

Pitch Yourself to a Local Radio Talk Show

Want to be on local talk radio? It's easier than you might think. Here's how:

First, scout local talk shows. Most medium-size or larger markets have a talk-news station, and that's probably where you'll have the best luck. Check listings for that and other stations carefully - they're often available on the web. Don't overlook public radio and college/university stations. See which programs are locally produced - you're not likely to be on a national program on National Public Radio or a nationally syndicated one like the Rush Limbaugh Show.

Then listen to each show to get a sense of whether any of them would give you the chance to get your message out.

Put together a three-paragraph "pitch letter" like the sample that follows. It should explain briefly (in one page or less) why quality afterschool programs are important, why and how these programs are threatened, how funding shortages affect local children and their families, and why you are qualified to talk about it.

Don't forget to mention that you recently traveled to Capitol Hill to talk with Members of Congress and their aides. Address the letter to the show's producer (call the station and ask for the name). Send the letter, then call to follow up the day after it arrives. When you call, be ready to repeat a distilled version of your basic "pitch" to the producer.



Sample Pitch Letter to Radio Talk Show

[May 19, 2011]

[Name of Producer]

[Name of Show], [radio station name]

[Address]

Dear [Mr./Ms. Producer]:

As any working parent in [name of community] can tell you, the hours immediately following the regular school day can be a time when parents worry about what their children are doing - whether they're safe and constructively engaged, or getting into trouble. Over the last two decades, afterschool programs have helped millions of families across the nation. But millions more are without the afterschool programs they need because of severe funding shortages, a problem made even worse by the current recession and by budget cuts.

As the director of the [name of program] in [name of community], I've seen first-hand what a difference afterschool makes in the lives of our kids, our families, and our communities. I've just returned from Washington, D.C., where I joined with hundreds of afterschool advocates from across the country in educating our Senators and Representatives about the benefits offered by afterschool programs and the need for more resources to support them. I met with several elected representatives from [state] and their aides, [including any Senators or Representatives with whom you met], for a wonderfully successful day of education on behalf of our kids.

I think this issue would be of interest to your listeners. According to recent research, the parents of more than 18 million children nationwide would sign their children up for afterschool programs if programs were available. Many of your listeners are probably in that group! If you're interested in doing a segment or show on the subject, I'd be happy to join you, and to help identify a parent or student who has benefited from afterschool, as well as a teacher or school principal who could describe the vital role afterschool programs play in reinforcing academic learning from the regular school day. I'll be in touch to follow up. Thanks very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your title]

[Your phone number]

Blog about Your Trip to Washington, D.C.

Many school districts around the country have blogs where parents, faculty, and other community members can learn about news and events related to the district and education. If your school district has a blog, you might consider submitting a post about your trip to Washington, D.C. for the *Afterschool for All Challenge*.

Blog posts are usually short, so keep yours fairly brief. You also want to communicate the excitement and importance of the *Challenge* and what it was like to meet with your Members of Congress and their aides, and to participate in this national advocacy effort.

Sample Blog:

Advocating for Afterschool

This week, I joined hundreds of afterschool directors, staff members, students and other advocates from across the country to spend two days in Washington, D.C., for the 10th annual [Afterschool for All Challenge](#), sponsored by the [Afterschool Alliance](#). We learned about how to educate policymakers, networked, and met with Members of Congress and their aides to encourage them to increase funding for afterschool.

Highlights of the *Challenge* included a day-long visit to Capitol Hill during which afterschool leaders met with hundreds of Members of Congress and their aides. The day began with the annual “Breakfast of Champions,” honoring afterschool leaders and supporters, including Members of Congress. Dean Kamen, inventor of the Segway and founder of FIRST Robotics was honored for his work to promote science and engineering through afterschool programs. Other speakers at the Challenge included Robin Schepper of First Lady Michelle Obama’s *Let’s Move!* Initiative and Kumar Garg, Policy Analyst, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President., **[Insert information on anyone from your state who was honored or participated in the program. Or make note of any locally recognizable speakers.]**

Later that day, I had the opportunity to meet with **[list any Senators or Representatives from your state who met with your group, or “aides to” Senators or Representatives]** about how important afterschool programs are in our community and all they do for children and working families. **[Add interesting information about what Senators, Representatives or their aides said to you, being careful not to overstate what they said.]**

We carried critical messages about the proven track record of afterschool programs. President Obama’s recent budget proposal for fiscal year 2012 would increase funds for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative, the principal federal funding stream for afterschool, by \$100 million. It would also add \$1.3 billion for the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), about a third of which would be used to provide services for school-age children. His proposals for 21st CCLC and CCDF deserve support, and we let lawmakers know that.

From 2007 through 2010, we saw modest progress on federal funding for afterschool, but that progress stopped this year, when afterschool took a cut in the 2011 budget. Nevertheless, we’re hopeful that as lawmakers learn more about the work we do in afterschool, we can sustain the federal commitment to our work.



Recent [research](#) from the Afterschool Alliance, sponsored by jcpenny, illustrates just how far we are from making afterschool available to all who need it. Among the most telling findings was that the parents of more than 18 million children not already in afterschool programs say they would sign their kids up if a program were available to them locally. That's exactly the problem, of course: not enough programs to meet demand.

We believe that by educating lawmakers about how afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire students to learn and help working families, we will have a chance at securing the funding afterschool programs need so that they may continue to provide their vital services to the community, here, across the state, and across the nation. That was a message our lawmakers needed to hear, and we were proud to deliver it!

For more information on how you can help, visit the [Afterschool Alliance](#) web site.