**Working Parents Need Care Across the Child Care Continuum**

**from Birth through School-Age**

***Request: Ensure the substantial increased federal investments to sustain the child care sector and support working parents are available to all ages of children served by the Child Care and Development Block Grant, birth to 13.***

**Key Fact - Demographics:**

* **45% of CCDBG participants are school-aged (5 to 13)[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has the important goal of supporting parents in or entering into the workforce by providing quality care and development opportunities for their children ages birth to 13, from infant to early adolescence. The wide range of ages is necessary when considering that parents of a seven or ten-year-old need safe, enriching spaces for their children during their traditional or non-traditional workday just as much as a parent of a 3 year old. For working parents of school-age children care can mean before school care, afterschool care, summer care, and during the Covid emergency, even full-day care if school buildings are operating remotely or in hybrid models.

Best practice in child and youth development reveals care, programming, and the physical environment can and should change alongside children as they age. For example, where a professional serving an infant may need training in best sleep practices, a professional serving a ten year old might have training on helping youth with healthy choices and behaviors, and how to incorporate youth voice into their programs to keep youth stimulated and engaged.

School-age care therefore often operates as a distinct entity in the CCDBG system. As states work to protect their child care sector from the harsh impact of the COVID emergency, ensuring attention to school age care providers in addition to the essential infant, toddler and Pre-K providers in the system is essential for keeping the sector able to provide parents with the care and quality they need for their children as they age.

**Key Fact - Research:**

* **Research shows participation in quality afterschool programs improves student academic, social and emotional success.**

The gains of early learning environments up to Pre-K, need to be supported and sustained as children age. Afterschool and summer programs continue to provide students with the adult relationships, academic supports and healthy habits development that lead to positive outcomes. Research from Deborah Vandell, chancellor’s professor at the University of California Irvine, and colleagues[[2]](#footnote-2) shows positive effects of afterschool participation on areas including student attendance, GPA, social interaction, and academic performance. Moreover, Vandell’s recent longitudinal research[[3]](#footnote-3) found additive effects “students who received higher quality ECE and had sustained participation in afterschool organized activities demonstrated higher academic achievement in high school... Importantly, the effects associated with early care and afterschool care also were exactly the same size indicating that both are good investments.”

**Key Fact – Youth Development:**

* **The ages of adolescence 9-24 are an essential and vulnerable developmental period for youth**

In 2019, a new report by the National Academies[[4]](#footnote-4) found “While the malleable brains of adolescents are adaptable to learning and innovation, they are also vulnerable to detrimental exposures, ranging from alcohol or drug use to the stresses of growing up in dangerous neighborhoods.  Adolescents also face varied access to opportunities and supports, which contributes to long-standing disparities measurable by race and ethnicity, socio-economic status, LGBTQ status, and ability status.” Staff training and program design are critical for making the most of early adolescence development.

***Key Fact - Accessibility:***

* ***High quality school-age programs are not available enough to meet demand and the COVID emergency is widening gaps in access.***

A recent 2020 survey of parents across the United States[[5]](#footnote-5), revealed that for every child with access to an afterschool program, 3 more were unable to participate either due to lack of availability or affordability. Fifty-six percent of elementary students and 5 million (47%) of middle school students currently not in a program would like to have access. Moreover, the COVID emergency has also affected access. A fall 2020 survey of the afterschool field found 87% of afterschool programs concerned for their program’s long term future and funding[[6]](#footnote-6). 82% of afterschool program providers surveyed in Fall 2020 mentioned being somewhat, very, or extremely considered about maintaining adequate staff through health concerns and new procedures. Their continuation will require school-age specific attention to maintain staff, information, training and best practice for this age group and settings. Additionally, 2 in 5 program providers reported waitlists for their programs while abiding by important COVID protocols.

***Key Fact - Quality:***

* ***Across the country school-age specific standards bring research based quality and observational tools and relevant professional development into practice.***

*These tools include:*

* The National Institute on Out of School Time [Assessment of Program Practices Tool](https://www.niost.org/Tools-Training/the-assessment-of-afterschool-program-practices-tool-apt) and Surveys of Academic and Youth Outcomes for Staff, Youth and Teachers[[7]](#footnote-7).
* David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality, [Youth Program Assessment](http://www.cypq.org/assessment)[[8]](#footnote-8)
* The School Age Rating Environment Scale ([SACERS-U](https://ers.fpg.unc.edu/node/73))[[9]](#footnote-9)
* State developed standards, [American Institutes for Research Quality Scan 2020](https://www.air.org/project/building-quality-afterschool)

***Key Fact - Safety:***

* ***All license exempt school-age CCDBG providers meet the CCDBG law’s health and safety and background check requirements. Exempt status is given so that providers will not have to change operations to incorporate standards that wouldn’t apply to or would be unnecessary for their particular setting or age group.***

Some examples of this may include, a school-age program operating in the physical setting of a public school where its participants attend during the day would not have to also be re-licensed as a stand alone center with a need to meet a different set of standards. Or a school-age only center serving no infants would not have to prevent students from using electrical outlets. Ensuring that the licensing requirements are appropriate to the age and setting of children served also enables more providers to be able to participate in the voucher program which helps increase supply and create more quality options for families. Appropriate requirements and training for school age also allows more targeted investments of professional development dollars, for example instead of a class in safe sleep, programs can receive training in healthy decision making, youth choice and voice, literacy support, trauma informed care, supporting early adolescence etc.

**Key Fact - Investment:**

* **To sustain and support the continuum of care from infant through school-age and to support parents while schools operate remotely, states across the country are investing portions of COVID relief and CCDBG quality dollars specifically to ensure the sustainability, availability, and quality of the school-age sector.**

Minnesota offers [grants with Federal Covid Relief Dollars](https://www.childcareawaremn.org/providers/covid-19-public-health-support-funds-for-child-care/) to licensed and [certified license exempt](https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/licensing/child-care-and-early-education/certified-license-exempt/) providers, as does [Georgia](http://www.decal.ga.gov/documents/attachments/CRRSAphaseone.pdf). New Jersey supported parents struggling to find care during virtual school by providing [tuition assistance grants for school-age children](https://www.childcarenj.gov/COVID19). Nebraska created a [fund specifically for the stabilization of school-age providers](https://www.nebraskachildren.org/school-age-providers.html). The Federal Office of Childcare’s Frequently Asked Questions clarified that funds could be used to sustain providers across the child care field, pay for enrollment rather than attendance and be used for students during the virtual school day as long as programming supplemented but did not replace school learning.

**Key Fact - Opportunity:**

* **Funding for the child care sector is a key piece in helping restart the economy. To enable parents to work full-time and support school-age youth who have missed up to a year of in-person schooling, widely available, quality school age care during afterschool and summer hours with professionals trained to help students recover emotionally and academically will be critical to the nation’s own recovery.**

The Federal Government recognized the essential role of child care in passing a series of laws to support the sector. These include the CARES Act in March 2020 with $3.5 billion in CCDBG relief funds and the CRRSA Act in December 2020 with $10 billion in relief funds and an additional focus on CCDBG eligible providers who had not received CCDBG funding in the past. The American Rescue Plan Act will provide $14.990 billion for additional CCDF funds. These funds are available to any CCDF eligible provider and providers licensed, regulated or registered by the state. This would include CCDF license exempt providers, and registered school-age programs. The bill also appropriates $23.975 billion for a child care stabilization fund. Up to 10% of the stabilization fund can be reserved by the state lead agency for areas such as technical assistance and increasing the supply of child care. The remaining 90% will be subgranted to CCDF eligible programs to sustain or restore their operations and support their staff, safety, and the children and families served.

***We strongly believe states that ensure ways to stabilize and support access to school-age programs in addition to investments in infant to Pre-K care, will help parents, businesses and students make the most of recovery for their state.***

1. https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/ncase-national-saccdataprofile-full-report-2020\_3\_0.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. http://expandinglearning.org/research/vandell/resources/VANDELL\_K4.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [Results: A 26-year study shows early care and afterschool are crucial, and benefits last | Mott Foundation](https://www.mott.org/news/articles/results-a-26-year-study-shows-early-care-and-afterschool-are-crucial-and-benefits-last/) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2019/05/new-report-calls-for-policies-and-practices-to-promote-positive-adolescent-development-and-close-the-opportunity-gap [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/AA3PM/ [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-COVID-19-Wave-3-Provider-Survey-Toplines.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.niost.org/Tools-Training/the-assessment-of-afterschool-program-practices-tool-apt> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www.cypq.org/assessment> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. https://ers.fpg.unc.edu/node/73 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)