

From a Time of Risk to a Time of Opportunity

This is Afterschool



The hours after the last school bell rings and before parents typically return home from work is a time of endless opportunities and potential for young people. It can be a time of learning and growth, when kids explore new topics in fields like science, technology, engineering, and math; discover new interests; and develop their communication, teamwork, and leadership skills alongside supportive mentors. It can also be a time of risk, as an October 2019 report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a membership organization of more than 5,000 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, and other law enforcement leaders, found.



9 in 10 adults agree that afterschool programs are important to their community

Although juvenile crime has dramatically decreased in the past decade, *From Risk to Opportunity: Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks* determined that nationally, the hours between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. are the peak time for juvenile crime.¹

In the U.S., for every 1 young person in an afterschool program that inspires learning, provides enriching activities, and keeps them safe, there are 2 more who are waiting to get in. Public support for afterschool is high, with 9 in 10 adults agreeing that afterschool programs are important to their community, but there are not enough programs today to meet the needs of all children and families. The new Fight Crime: Invest in Kids data is further evidence of the need to do more to help ensure that all youth are able to take advantage of the benefits and supports that afterschool programs provide.

Juvenile Crime in New Jersey

Analyzing data obtained from the law enforcement partners in the state, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids' report, *From Risk to Opportunity: Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks*, determined that 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. is the peak time for juvenile crime in New Jersey during school days, with 32% of crimes occurring during this time period. However, it is worthwhile to note that the 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. window has the second highest peak, with close to 1 in 3 juvenile crimes occurring during this time (31%).

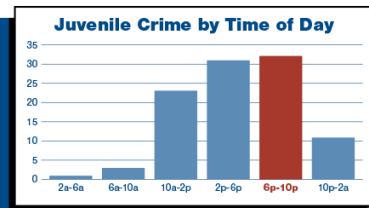
In New Jersey, 78% of parents agree that afterschool programs help to give parents peace of mind about their children when they are at work and 69% agree that afterschool programs help to keep kids safe and out of trouble. Yet, for every student in an afterschool program, 2 more would participate if a program were available.

With 422,067 students in New Jersey waiting to get into an afterschool program, increased investment in afterschool programs is needed.

The Prime Time for Juvenile Crime in New Jersey

Quality Afterschool Programs:

- Reduce Crime
- Boost Academics
- Improve Behavior
- Lead to Healthier Habits
- Save Money



#AfterschoolFightsCrime

FightCrime

FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS
TOOLKIT FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT

Program Spotlight

Middle Earth Youth Agency | Bridgewater, NJ



In 1969, a local church minister identified a great need among Bridgewater's at-risk youth for a safe place to go after school. What began as a weekly church meeting sparked the founding of Middle Earth youth agency in 1972. For more than 40 years, Middle Earth has provided comprehensive afterschool programming to local middle and high school students. The array of preventative and intervention services that Middle Earth provides are a part of its central mission to build a strong support system for youth that promotes a healthy and successful transition to adulthood.

Through its three community youth centers, Middle Earth offers a number of different programs that have been developed over the years based on community need. One such program is the JOURNEYS Program, which provides academic support and mentoring and employment readiness

preparation for youth ages 12 to 17 who exhibit risky behaviors such as run-ins with police, truancy, or acting out in school. Middle Earth reports that in 2018, 95 percent of JOURNEYS Program participants had no further police contact and found the program to be useful. In addition, more than 80 percent improved their peer-to-peer interactions and in-school behavior. Executive Director of Middle Earth Maria Strada said, "We work hard to connect with our community's teens so that they feel valued, avoid risky behavior, and realize they are capable of thoroughly succeeding in their life." Mayor Brian Gallagher and Councilman Rob Wilson agree, commenting on Middle Earth's programs as, "...creating opportunity, providing an outlet for youth that have challenges in their lives, and enabling youth to gain a foothold to set them back in the right direction."



Afterschool Alliance

afterschoolalliance.org

Source

¹ Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. (2019). *From Risk to Opportunity: Afterschool Programs Keep Kids Safe When Juvenile Crime Peaks*. Retrieved from www.strongnation.org/articles/930-from-risk-to-opportunity-afterschool-programs-keep-kids-safe

The Afterschool Alliance is working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs. Learn more at: www.afterschoolalliance.org