

MEDIA OUTREACH IDEAS & TIPS

Afterschool advocates have many ways to generate news coverage about the importance of the afterschool and summer learning programs that keep our kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give working families peace of mind. The following ideas, samples, and instructional information can help you get out your messages about afterschool.

- **Messages that Work**
- **Submit a Letter-to-the-Editor to a Local Newspaper**
- **Pitch a Segment to a Local Radio Talk Show**
- **Write a Blog Post About Your Trip**

MESSAGES THAT WORK

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

- Afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give parents peace of mind.
- These programs help students succeed in school and in life by providing homework help, science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) education, mentoring, sports and physical activities, healthy snacks and meals, robotics, computer programming, college- and job-readiness, opportunities for hands-on learning, and much more.
- But there aren't nearly enough programs to meet the need. Today in our country, for every child in an afterschool program, four more are waiting to get in. Some 24.7 million children not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them, according to a 2022 survey of approximately 1,500 parents. That is the highest number ever recorded.
- Unmet demand for afterschool programs is significantly higher among Latino and Black children than among children overall. Cost is the top barrier to enrollment, cited by 57% of parents as a reason for not enrolling their child. Ninety percent rate the quality of the program their child attends as excellent or very good.
- Americans want more public funding for more programs. A public opinion survey released in February of 2025 finds that 85% of voters say they want their newly elected leaders to provide more funds for afterschool programs. That support is broad-based and includes 92% of Democrats, 81% of Independents, 77% of Republicans, and 77% of people who voted for President Trump.
- But our federal government is on a different path.
- Congress has failed to significantly increase federal funds for afterschool and summer learning programs for several years, even as costs have soared, need has increased, and labor shortages have become a concern.
- And the FY26 budget proposal the Trump administration released in early May appears to eliminate dedicated funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs. That would almost certainly result in the closure of many programs, which, in turn, would mean more children and youth unsupervised and at risk each afternoon, more academic failures and dropouts, more hungry kids, more chronic absenteeism, more parents forced out of their jobs, and a less STEM-ready and successful workforce in the future.

- Deep cuts to AmeriCorps, the impending closure of the U.S. Department of Education, and elimination of several other programs that support afterschool are also creating challenges for afterschool and summer learning programs that could result in diminished program offerings and fewer programs, creating even more unmet need.
- The United States needs more quality afterschool programs. We need federal, state, and local lawmakers, businesses, and philanthropy to understand the vast harms when afterschool programs don't get the funds they need to serve our children and communities. If we want our kids to succeed and our schools, communities, and economy to thrive, we will invest more in afterschool and summer learning programs.

SEND A LETTER-TO-THE-EDITOR

Look at your newspaper's letters page. Scan it or the paper's online letters section for instructions on word counts and how to submit your letter. If you can't find instructions, call the paper and ask to speak to the letters editor to get that information. Also, check whether published letters all refer to stories or editorials the newspaper recently ran; some newspapers insist on it, others do not. Then write a letter that reflects what you've learned—length, tone, keyed to a story already published in the newspaper or not, etc.

Follow the newspaper's instructions on how to submit the letter and be sure to include a phone number (not for publication) so the editor can confirm that you are the person who submitted the letter.

A sample fill-in-the-blanks letter-to-the-editor is below. Please modify the text, so if the newspaper asks if the letter is being submitted to any other newspapers around the nation, you can honestly answer that yours is unique. Newspapers are sensitive to this issue.

If there is more than one newspaper in your media market, do not submit the same letter to more than one of them. Either choose one outlet for your letter or submit an entirely different letter from someone else who supports your program to a second outlet. Don't forget to consider weekly, ethnic, or other newspapers for your placement.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR

[Date]

Letters-to-the-Editor

[Name of newspaper]

[Address]

[City, State, Zip]

To the Editor:

Too many children in our community leave school each afternoon without organized activities or adult supervision awaiting them. It's no coincidence that those afternoons are when children are most likely to be victims of crime and to engage in risky behaviors. They're also missing out on opportunities to get help with homework, engage with caring adults, and learn new skills.

Afterschool programs provide a safe alternative, offering educational and enrichment opportunities during those sometimes-perilous hours. They keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give families peace of mind that their kids are safe and supervised after the school day ends and while parents are still at their jobs. [Add a sentence about the offerings by afterschool programs in your community.]

But unfortunately, the afterschool programs so many families rely on are at risk. The Trump administration's FY26 budget proposal appears to eliminate dedicated funding for the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and

summer learning programs. That would likely result in the closure of many afterschool programs, which in turn would mean more children and youth unsupervised and at risk each afternoon, more academic failures and dropouts, more hungry kids, more parents forced out of their jobs, and a less STEM-ready workforce.

That's why I joined afterschool the Afterschool Alliance event in Washington, D.C. last week to remind our members of Congress why afterschool programs are so important. Our schools, communities and families will be stronger, and our kids will have a brighter future, if lawmakers keep that in mind.

Sincerely,

[Your name]

[Your program]

[Your email and phone number, not for publication]

PITCH A SEGMENT 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 public radio and/or talk/news station, and that's probably where you'll have the most luck. Check listings for that and other stations carefully—they're often available online. Don't overlook college/university stations. See which programs are produced locally and listen to get a sense of whether any of them would offer you the chance to get your message out.

Put together a three- or four-paragraph (or so) "pitch letter" like the sample that follows. It should explain briefly why quality afterschool programs are important, the harm caused by underfunding, 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). Email the letter, then call to follow up the next day. When you call, be ready to repeat a distilled version of your basic "pitch" to the producer.

SAMPLE PITCH LETTER TO RADIO TALK SHOW

[Date]

[Name of Producer]

[Name of Show], [Radio station name]

[Address]

Dear [Name]:

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 whether their children are safe and constructively engaged – or at risk. Over the last two decades, afterschool programs have helped millions of families, including many here in our community.

But millions more children are without the afterschool programs they need – and the already-inadequate federal support for these programs is at risk because the Trump administration's FY26 budget proposal appears to eliminate dedicated federal funding for afterschool and summer learning programs. That would result in the closure of many of the afterschool and summer learning programs families rely on, which, in turn would mean more children and youth unsupervised and at risk each afternoon, more academic failures and dropouts, more hungry kids, more chronic absenteeism, more parents forced out of their jobs, and a less STEM-ready and successful workforce in the future.

As the [title] of the [name of program] here in [name of community], I've seen firsthand what a difference afterschool makes in the lives of our children and families, our workforce and our community. I've just returned from Washington, D.C., where I joined with afterschool advocates from across the country in educating our senators and representatives about the benefits offered by afterschool programs and the need to continue and increase support for them. I met with several of our elected representatives 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 know this topic is of interest to your listeners. 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 programs, advocacy groups, and parent communities have blogs to help community members learn about news and events that affect them. If your program or partners have 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 and conversational, so keep yours fairly brief. You also want to communicate the excitement and importance of the Afterschool for All Challenge and what it was like to educate your members of Congress and their aides about the benefits afterschool and summer learning programs provide, and what's at stake in this debate.

SAMPLE BLOG POST: EDUCATING LAWMAKERS ABOUT AFTERSCHOOL

Eliminating Federal Afterschool Funding Would Put Our Kids – and Our Future – at Risk

Afterschool programs are vital to our children and families, here in [city] and across the country. They offer tremendous benefits and have [overwhelming voter support](#), but these programs are facing urgent challenges, exacerbated when the [Trump administration released its FY26 budget proposal](#) last week. It appears to eliminate dedicated funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs. That would likely result in many afterschool and summer learning programs closing which, in turn, would mean more children and youth unsupervised and at risk each afternoon, more academic failures and dropouts, more hungry kids, more chronic absenteeism, more parents forced out of their jobs, and a less STEM-ready and successful workforce in the future.

That's why I joined afterschool advocates from across the country last week at an Afterschool Alliance event that educated members of Congress about the myriad benefits afterschool programs provide. We told them that afterschool programs keep kids safe, inspire them to learn, and give parents peace of mind by providing homework help, STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education, mentoring, sports and physical activities, healthy snacks and meals, robotics, computer programming, college- and job-readiness, opportunities for hands-on learning, and more.

We noted that years of research, including [a new report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine](#), demonstrate that afterschool and summer learning programs support a wide range of positive outcomes

for students, families, and communities.

We reminded lawmakers that these programs make it possible for many parents to earn a living, and that the loss of their kids' afterschool programs would jeopardize their ability to hold jobs and support their families.

We also said that already, there aren't nearly enough programs to meet the need. Today in our country, for every child in an afterschool program, four more are waiting to get in. Some [24.7 million children](#) not in an afterschool program would be enrolled, if a program were available to them. [Add your state data.]

But programs are struggling as costs have soared, need has increased, and labor shortages have become a concern. Now, the administration's FY26 budget proposal coupled with [cuts to AmeriCorps](#), the impending closure of the U.S. Department of Education, and cuts to other programs that support afterschool are creating new challenges that could mean diminished program offerings and fewer programs, creating even more unmet need.

We need federal, state, and local lawmakers, businesses, and philanthropy to understand the harm when afterschool programs don't get the funds they need to serve our children, families, and communities. We were proud to deliver the message that we should be investing more in afterschool and summer learning programs. You can echo it in [emails and letters](#) to help make sure lawmakers understand what's at stake.