

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 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 give parents peace of mind that their children are safe, supervised, and learning when schools are closed.
- 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.
- 95% of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the program their child attends.
- But there aren't nearly enough programs to meet the need. The parents of 29.6 million children in the United States want afterschool programs for their children – but less than 7 million are currently enrolled. 3 in 4 kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them (77%) are being left behind.
- Unmet demand for afterschool programs is at an all-time high among both Latino and Black children.
- Cost and accessibility are the barriers many families cannot overcome.
- It's no wonder that 89% of parents favor public funding for these programs, and support crosses all demographic and political party lines. But lawmakers have 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.
- Unfortunately, we expect the Trump administration's FY27 budget proposal to eliminate dedicated funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the chief federal funding stream for afterschool and summer learning programs. If Congress agreed to do that, we would almost certainly see more 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.

- 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.
- Our country needs more quality afterschool programs. We need federal, state, and local lawmakers, businesses, and philanthropy to recognize the vast harm when afterschool programs are not funded well enough 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 local 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 to publish your letter.

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 afternoons are when children are most likely to be victims of crime and to engage in risky behaviors.

Afterschool programs provide a safe alternative, offering fun, educational 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, supervised and learning after the school day ends. **[Add a sentence about your afterschool program’s offerings.]**

But there aren’t nearly enough afterschool programs to meet the need. That’s because, for years as costs have skyrocketed and need has grown, lawmakers have failed to increase federal afterschool funding. That’s why I joined the Afterschool Alliance in Washington, D.C. last week to meet with our members of Congress to discuss why afterschool programs are so important. We warned them that the Trump administration is likely to try again to end federal afterschool funding, but that would be devastating for our community.

We need to increase funding for these essential programs because without them, more children and youth will be unsupervised and at risk each afternoon and we’ll have more academic failures and dropouts, more hungry kids, more parents forced out of their jobs, and a less STEM-ready workforce.

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 those and other stations, which are often listed 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 Washington, D.C. 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, year after year, the Trump administration proposes ending dedicated federal funding for afterschool and summer learning programs. That would be devastating. It would 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.

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 afterschool programs offer, and the need to 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

Our Community Needs More Afterschool Programs, and More Afterschool Funding, Now

Afterschool programs have a remarkable record of helping 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. In our country today, 95% of parents with children in afterschool programs are satisfied with the program their child attends.

But there aren't nearly enough programs to meet the need. Nationwide, the [parents of 29.6 million children](#) want afterschool programs for their children – but less than 7 million are currently enrolled. Three in four kids whose parents want afterschool programs for them (77%) are being left behind. **[Add your state data.]**

That needs to change, and it's why I joined afterschool advocates from across the country last week at an Afterschool Alliance event in Washington, D.C. to educate 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 that their children are safe, supervised, and learning when schools are closed. We noted that years of research, including [a 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 go to work and earn a living.

And we warned that unless federal support for afterschool programs increases at this time when costs are soaring and need is so high, many of the programs students and families rely on could close. We are especially concerned that the Trump administration's FY27 budget proposal will recommend ending dedicated federal funding for afterschool programs. That, coupled with cuts to AmeriCorps and the impending closure of the U.S. Department of Education could mean fewer programs serving fewer students, and even more unmet need.

We need federal, state, and local lawmakers, businesses, and philanthropy to understand the harm when afterschool programs are without 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. I hope you will echo it in [emails and letters](#) too, to help make sure lawmakers recognize what's at stake.