



Talking to Congress about Afterschool

The focus of these calls was originally on three key policy issues (21st CCLC, CCDBG, Summer Meals Act), which are critical to children, youth, and families who depend on afterschool. But given the state of the world today it makes sense to talk about current concerns and share the impact of COVID-19 on communities and how afterschool programs are responding, as well as the need for flexibility for grant funded programs.

A few last minute tips:

- ☑ Be sure to stay on-topic and convey the important benefits of afterschool for kids, families, and communities.
- ☑ Share what you are hearing from program staff and families about ways afterschool is responding and support needed from the federal level.
- ☑ Manage the time you are allotted properly.
- ☑ Allow everyone to say a few words if possible, recognizing that the dynamics of a conference call are challenging.
- ☑ Offer to follow up with additional information.

Introductions _____

The Group Leader should introduce themselves first, followed by everyone else. State your name, title and organization or affiliation.

Thanks for taking the time to meet with us.

- Today we're joining with hundreds of afterschool and summer learning supporters in a virtual day of action. More than 200 conference calls with Congressional staff will be taking place as part of the Afterschool for All Challenge, an event organized by the Afterschool Alliance.
- We originally wanted to talk to you about these three things — 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Child Care Development Block Grant, and Summer Meals Act — all of which are critical to young people and families who depend on afterschool. But given the state of the world today we think it makes sense to shift and talk about what communities and afterschool programs are facing at the local and state level as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 update

In this time, when many parents are going to work while their children are home due to school closures, we are all reminded about the importance of supporting afterschool and summer learning programs year-round.

Wherever possible, programs are working to ensure parents and students have the meals, support, and resources they need while schools are closed and that staff have paid sick leave when needed. Other programs that can no longer stay open are working to ensure that staff are ready to serve students when programs are able to resume operations.

PROVIDE YOUR OWN LOCAL EXAMPLES OF SOLUTIONS AS WELL AS QUESTIONS AND CHALLENGES

While the situation remains fluid, we thank Congress for including emergency paid leave and school meal flexibility in the Families First Coronavirus Response Act and ask that Congress consider afterschool and summer learning specifically in the next COVID-19 emergency legislation package, including possibly addressing the following:

- Direct assistance to providers based on enrollment, not attendance, including but not limited to the Nita M. Lowey 21st Century Community Learn Center (21st CCLC) Program
- Payments to programs and workers in the case of COVID-19 related closures of school or community-based afterschool programs, including back-up care
- Payments to programs to continue to serve children when parents or caregivers experience an inability to make co-payments or pay tuition
- Assistance to cover the cost of substitute educators at afterschool programs
- Consider community-based afterschool programs as a resource to provide meals to students when schools are closed, and provide flexibility and resources for that to occur

21st CCLC and CCDBG Ask

In these times it is also important to ensure that long term the federal government continues its strong support of local school and community-based afterschool and summer learning programs.

- Thank you for supporting funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Center initiative (21st CCLC) and the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG) in the FY2020 spending bill. We're here to ask you to build on the success of these investments by supporting funding for 21st CCLC and CCDBG in fiscal year 2021.
- Please increase funding for the 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) initiative by \$100 million for FY2021, bringing the total to \$1.35 billion. This amount would allow approximately 100,000 additional children to access quality afterschool, before-school, and summer learning programs through school and community-based providers in all 50 states and would help address rising expenses associated with hiring and training quality staff.
- Please help ensure the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) has the essential discretionary funding it needs for FY 2021, by maintaining or increasing the current funding levels. Roughly 45 percent of children served through Child Care Development Funds are school-aged (under 13 years old) and many participate in afterschool programs. Additional funding is necessary to implement the updates, such as enhanced safety requirements and monitoring, made to the law in the December 2014 reauthorization.

Make afterschool real and relevant

- *Talk about how many children are currently served through 21st CCLC in your state/community versus how many are on waitlists or could be served with more funding (see your state fact sheet and listing of 21st CCLC grants, and draw the member's or staffer's attention to those same materials in the leave behind packet).*
- *Talk about your program(s). Tell a story about how your program makes an impact in your community*
- *Talk about the unmet needs that remain in your community.*
- *In addition, if you have any of your own evaluation data at the state or local level, be sure to share it.*

Afterschool Caucus and Lights On Invitation

Lastly, please join the Afterschool Caucus and support Lights On Afterschool this October by visiting a program!

Check Caucus list first. If the member is already on the Caucus, skip this section and thank them for being on the Caucus.

- To show your support for afterschool programs, we ask that you (*or your boss, depending on whether you are meeting with a member or staff member*) join the (*House/Senate*) Afterschool Caucus and help realize the goal of providing access to afterschool opportunities for all youth.

Wrap-up and Next Steps

- Reinforce importance of afterschool programs in helping communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.
- Wrap up the meeting by thanking the staff person or member again for their time.
- Reference the materials in the virtual folder for additional information on 21st CCLC, CCDBG and Summer Meals, and ask who you should contact about scheduling a site visit the next time the member is at home.
- Mention *Lights On Afterschool* on Oct. 22, 2020, and raise the possibility of your member participating in your event.
- Offer yourself as a resource any time they are looking for information or a program to visit.

Plan to send a follow up or thank you email after the meeting.

Optional Ask: Child Nutrition Reauthorization and the Summer Meals Act

Please cosponsor the bipartisan, bicameral Summer Meals Act (S. 1908/HR 2818) which seeks to increase the number of communities and students served by the Summer Food Service Program and which would make afterschool and summer meal eligibility consistent with the eligibility for a 21st CCLC grant.

- Summer meals programs offered in congregate feeding locations, such as summer learning programs and camps, recreation centers, libraries, and other community spaces are often the key connection students have to learning over the summer months. Meals programs that support enrichment opportunities in addition to meals service have been a successful element of the summer meals program. We need to continue to sustain the funding and motivation to serve the whole child with the meals program wherever possible.
- Changing the area eligibility test for summer and afterschool meals to allow community-based organizations to participate if 40 percent of the children in the area are eligible for free or reduced-price meals will increase the number of sites and number of children served. Currently, a summer meal site qualifies if 50 percent or more of children in the area qualify for free or reduced price school meals as defined by school or census data. This threshold keeps many communities with significant numbers of low-income children, but not a high enough concentration of poverty, from participating. In addition, the 50 percent test is inconsistent with federally funded summer programs, such as 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Title I, which require at least 40 percent. Communities eligible for these important education programs should also be eligible to receive summer meals funding.
- Keeping students engaged over the summer so that we can help feed their minds and bodies is essential to the work we do as communities and educators. 85 percent of parents support public funding for summer learning programs and 88 percent of teachers report that summer learning programs are critical to students' success. In fact, summer learning loss has been shown to account for two-thirds of the achievement gap between low income children and middle-income peers by 9th grade. Summer meals can be a hook to keep young people learning and healthy over the summer months.
- The Summer Meals Act should be included as part of the comprehensive Child Nutrition Reauthorization legislation that Congress is working on this year.