



NEWS RELEASE
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New Survey Finds Afterschool Funding Precarious in Iowa

As Iowa Celebrates Lights On Afterschool Today, New Survey Finds Working Parents, Social Service Agencies Bear Burden of Afterschool Funding; Transportation to Programs a Problem for Many

A new survey released today in conjunction with *Lights On Afterschool*, a national rally with more than 7,500 events around the country, finds that many of Iowa's afterschool programs are fully subscribed but still unable to meet the demand in their communities, and that programs are highly dependent on parent fees and social services for funds. The web-based survey of 62 Iowa afterschool providers, who collectively serve more than 16,000 children, also finds that transportation is a barrier to youth attending afterschool programs.

According to **Uncertain Times: Funding Insecurity Puts Afterschool Programs at Risk**, afterschool programs in Iowa are serving more children than expected and are struggling to maintain their funding – and parents who cannot afford fees or transportation to and from programs must make tough decisions about care for their children after the school day ends. Nearly all respondents say that more children in their communities could benefit from afterschool programs, if they were available.

“Nearly 60% of the cost burden of our afterschool programs is shouldered by parents,” said Rachel Scott, Statewide Coordinator for the Iowa Afterschool Alliance. “As one of the top ranking states with either both parents or the only parent working, we need to take a serious look at how to better help families find and pay for available programs to keep kids safe and learning after school.”

“Afterschool programs offer a variety of critically important services and supports, from homework help to mentoring opportunities to sports and fitness activities, to job training and career development,” added Chris Francis, Director of the Grundy Family YMCA in Grundy Center, and an Afterschool Ambassador with the Afterschool Alliance. “They keep children safe, inspire them to learn and help working families. When we shortchange afterschool programs, we put our future at risk.”

Iowa respondents to the survey represent 170 afterschool program sites. They report:

- 74% of afterschool programs operated at or above maximum capacity during the 2005/2006 school year.

- 82% of respondents say that there are children in their communities who need afterschool programs and don't have access to them.
- Two in three respondents say that parent fees are a source of funding for their program. 21% of respondents receive funding from the department of social services. Yet, only 15% of respondents receive funding from 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the only federal funding stream solely devoted to afterschool programs.
- 33% of respondents say that funding is down a little (19%) or a lot (14%) in the last two years. Another 47% say it is unchanged. 16% say it is up a little, and just 4% say funding is up a lot.
- If programs are able to see an increase in funding, they are most likely to increase the number of students they serve.
- Respondents say the top three barriers to participation in afterschool programs are transportation, cost, and lack of available slots. In fact, 84% of program operators say that transportation is a slight or significant barrier.

“Rural and urban programs alike are also facing a major barrier in lack of available transportation. Some families make the tough choice to have their kids home alone because they can't leave work to transport them to programs,” added Scott.

“By not providing stable, secure funding, we're playing Russian roulette with the afterschool programs that are critical to our children and families,” warned Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “But programs cannot serve all the children who need them when they are underfunded and have uncertain futures. We can, and must, do better.”

The bi-partisan *No Child Left Behind Act* authorizes \$2.5 billion for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative in FY 2007, but funding has fallen far behind authorized levels. Congress is on track to provide less than \$1 billion next year. If the initiative were funded at *No Child Left Behind* levels, 1.5 million more children would have access to quality afterschool programs. Most states and local communities are unable to pick up the slack.

Afterschool supporters around the country are joining the seventh annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the national rally for afterschool, today and throughout October. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, this year's *Lights On Afterschool* includes some 7,500 events throughout the nation and at military bases around the world at which a million Americans will urge their leaders to support the afterschool programs that keep children safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

UNCERTAIN TIMES used web-based survey software and the survey was emailed to more than 10,000 contacts in the Afterschool Alliance database in August and September of 2006. Recipients were encouraged to forward the survey to afterschool program staff, and programs were asked to be certain that only one person per program completed the survey and to provide responses from a site-level coordinator when possible. 2,614 responses were reviewed. 503 of them did not provide sufficient data to be included in the final analysis or were duplicate responses; therefore the final sample was 2,111 responses which represent approximately 9,813 afterschool sites serving more than 1.5 million children. (Many respondents are responsible for multiple sites.)

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The Afterschool Alliance is a nonprofit public awareness and advocacy organization working to ensure that all children and youth have access to quality afterschool programs by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.