

## *Uncertain Times 2012*—Pennsylvania Afterschool Programs Still Struggling in Today's Economy

Afterschool programs provide a lifeline for families and communities across the nation, providing a safe and supervised space for kids to engage in creative, educational activities with caring adults and mentors. But a rocky economic climate and tightened budgets at the local, state and federal levels have put these programs at risk.

*Uncertain Times 2012*, conducted between April 25 and June 8, 2012, is the third installment of the Afterschool Alliance's *Uncertain Times* survey series that assesses the impact of economic conditions on afterschool programs. While many studies have evaluated the impact of programs, *Uncertain Times* is the only research to examine the fiscal health of afterschool programs and their ability to meet the needs of their communities. Based on 1,012 survey responses, the national report finds that afterschool programs are struggling to meet the needs of children and families in their communities, as they face shrinking resources and dismal prospects for new support. Hardest hit are programs serving disadvantaged communities—the very population that has the most to gain from afterschool and summer programs.

In Pennsylvania, compared to the national average, the effects of the economy are more severely impacting afterschool programs. Based on responses from 64 program providers—of which 60 percent are located in urban communities, 28 percent in suburban communities and 18 percent in rural communities—Pennsylvania afterschool programs are facing greater budgetary problems and are forecasting a much bleaker financial future than afterschool programs as a whole nationally.

Afterschool programs serve as a safety net for communities that are struggling: helping kids stay away from risky behaviors, keeping kids in school, contributing to students' academic success and providing peace of mind to working families.<sup>i</sup> In Pennsylvania, afterschool providers are more likely than afterschool providers overall to report that their communities are deeply affected by the tough economic times and they are also more likely to report that they are not able to meet the needs of their communities. Afterschool programs in Pennsylvania are also serving a high needs population—an average of 63 percent of children qualify for free or reduced price lunch, an average of 13 percent of children have special needs or learning differences and an average of 10 percent of children are Limited English Proficient.

**Key data for Pennsylvania include:<sup>ii</sup>**

## CURRENT BUDGET

	Pennsylvania	National	Difference
My program's budget is in worse shape today than it was at the height of the recession	47%	39%	↑8
My program's funding is down a little or a lot from three years ago	71%	62%	↑9
My program's budget is inadequate to meet the needs of the community	61%	57%	↑4

## PROGRAM SERVICES

	Pennsylvania	National	Difference
Children in the community need afterschool care, but are unable to access it	86%	88%	↓2
My program would need to at least double its capacity to meet the needs of all kids in the community	25%	24%	↑1
Loss of funding caused major cutbacks or shut down sites	18%	16%	↑2

Top three changes Pennsylvania afterschool programs instituted due to a loss of funding or budget stagnation:

1. Fee increase
2. Field trips cut or reduced
3. Variety of activities reduced

## COMMUNITY INFORMATION

	Pennsylvania	National	Difference
The challenging economic climate is affecting my community	98%	97%	↑1
The community is showing very little signs of recovering from the economic recession	71%	55%	↑16

## FUTURE OUTLOOK

	Pennsylvania	National	Difference
The challenging economic climate will affect my program during the 2012-2013 school year	96%	85%	↑11
My program's funding for the next 1-2 years is less than secure	75%	61%	↑14
My program's funding for the next 3-5 years is less than secure	92%	81%	↑11

<sup>i</sup> The Afterschool Alliance. (2012). *Afterschool Essentials: Research and Polling*. Retrieved from [http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/2012/Essentials\\_4\\_20\\_12\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/2012/Essentials_4_20_12_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>ii</sup> Percentages are based on afterschool program providers who agree with the following statements.