

JUVENILE JUSTICE



Promise South Salt Lake

South Salt Lake City, Utah

2,700

Average number of students served during the school year

95%

Students from low-income families

Main funding sources:

- ▶ 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative
- ▶ Child Care Development Block Grant Funds (CCDF)
- ▶ Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grants (TANF)
- ▶ United Way of Salt Lake
- ▶ Nonprofit partners
- ▶ County substance abuse prevention grants

Connecting youth to supports in the community

In the United States, involvement with the juvenile justice system can have a long-lasting negative impact on one's life. For young people placed in detention facilities, their education, their ties to society, and their lives are disrupted. Involvement with the justice system—regardless of incarceration—can have implications for one's future earning potential and career trajectory, limiting access one has to educational opportunities, career fields, and available supports.

Afterschool and summer learning programs can mitigate risk and support the development of protective factors that help keep young people out of the juvenile justice system. The afterschool field can also serve as alternatives to detention that keep youth from re-offending. Through programming opportunities, partnerships, and coordinated efforts, afterschool programs keep young people safe, connect them to the supports they need, and help build protective factors and positive social connections that lead to bright futures.

Overview

Promise South Salt Lake (PSSL) operates 14 community and school-based sites across the city, serving students in grades K-12 through partnerships with 110 youth-focused groups. PSSL takes a holistic, community-wide approach, helping children and their families connect to services in areas including health care, education, safety, and housing. As a component of a larger network of community supports, PSSL works to provide all students in the community with high-quality afterschool programming, in subject areas such as literacy, substance use prevention, and service learning.

A typical day for students

Promise South Salt Lake operates as a citywide afterschool system; while each program is unique, students across all 14 sites experience similar programming and service. During the school year, programs run five days a week from 3 to 6 p.m. Every day, students are given a snack and then take part in an "Academic Hour" for tutoring, homework help, and other academic activities. Many students have limited English proficiency, therefore academic programming is geared toward helping students make grade-level gains in English language arts and math. After their Academic Hour, students are given dinner, followed by 45 minutes of daily enrichment activities, which can include science, technology,

engineering, and math (STEM) learning; art; recreation; prevention programs; and service learning activities. On Fridays, programs devote more time to enrichment activities.

Outcomes

A 2020 report indicated that the community's efforts have had a positive impact on reducing juvenile crime in the community. From 2010-2019, juvenile arrests overall declined by 71 percent; on school days between 3 and 6 p.m., there was a 67 percent reduction in juvenile arrests. Teachers report that students participating in the programs have made academic and behavioral gains. 74 percent of elementary teachers and 67 percent of middle and high school teachers reported an improvement in school behavior, and 66 percent of elementary teachers and 61 percent of middle and high school teachers noted an improvement in grades.

Program characteristics

Promise South Salt Lake was inspired by a statement by South Salt Lake City Mayor Cherie Wood: "What I want for myself and for my family, I want for every person in my community."

To embody this vision, PSSL created nine councils to focus on specific areas such as health care, education, safety, economic development, and housing. Simultaneously, councils coordinate and collaborate with each other to provide quality programming, resources, and opportunities for the city's youth and families.

This collaboration is key to executing the three principal efforts of PSSL programming: keeping kids safe, supporting college readiness, and providing opportunities for good health and prosperity. Schools, social workers, and law enforcement refer students to PSSL for academic supports as well as prevention programming that aims to reduce risk factors for youth (such as involvement in gang activity) and increase protective factors (such as smart decision-making and understanding how to deal with peer pressure). PSSL works closely with the city police department, where officers serve as mentors to youth in the programs and participate in community events to strengthen police-community relations. In another partnership, PSSL teams up with Planned Parenthood Association of Utah and local universities to offer retreats focused on sexual health and healthy decision-making in the face of peer pressure.

PSSL's afterschool programming also serves as an entryway for families to connect to various community resources. PSSL family liaisons—employed across sites—connect students' families to additional services they might need, including health clinics, food pantries, and workforce training.



Challenges

Each component that helps determine one's prospects in life—education, employment, and future involvement with the justice system—can be adversely affected by involvement with the juvenile justice system.

Educational attainment. Youth in detention are more likely to be below grade level in academic achievement, suspended or been held back a grade in school, and suffering from learning disabilities. Young people who are incarcerated are also less likely to graduate from high school and involvement with the juvenile justice system may preclude youth from entrance to colleges and universities and access to financial aid.

Employment. A juvenile crime record can have an impact on young people's future earning potential and future employment, as many employers consider prior criminal involvement when evaluating candidates. Prior criminal records are a contributing reason why 71 percent of young people aged 17 to 24 are ineligible to serve in the military.

Future incarceration. Young people involved with the juvenile justice system are up to 16 percent more likely than their non-involved peers to be incarcerated as adults.

Read [*From Prevention to Diversion: The Role of Afterschool in the Juvenile Justice System*](#) to learn more.

The varying degree of roles that afterschool programs play

Afterschool programs can assist youth at-risk or involved with the juvenile justice system in many ways. Their role can vary depending on a number of factors, including the program's capacity, structure, and partnerships with other groups working with at-risk or justice-involved youth. Broadly, this involvement exists on a spectrum, with prevention being the most expansive category of activities and diversion focusing more specifically on one form of prevention; each of the three categories outlined build off of each other.

UNIVERSAL

Afterschool programs can help keep youth out of the juvenile justice system by supporting the development of protective factors (such as positive self-concept, interpersonal skills, and ability to make responsible decisions, and providing protective factors) including access to caring mentors and a safe and supportive environment. Programs may also employ specific prevention curricula.

PREVENTION

SPECIALIZED

Afterschool programs can target their outreach and programming to connect with at-risk youth in the community and prevent them from getting involved with the juvenile justice system. For example, through partnerships with community stakeholders, such as schools, social workers, juvenile justice courts or probation offices, and/or law enforcement agencies, programs may receive referrals to reach youth who are in need of their services and supports.

TARGETED PROGRAMMING

INTENSIVE

Afterschool programs can serve as an alternative to out-of-home placements or typical probation program and focus on connecting youth with resources and supports that help address root causes of their behavior, redirect them, and prevent future offending. Programming is intentionally designed for this purpose and youth are explicitly referred to the program.

DIVERSION

Program history

Promise South Salt Lake started in 2008 in response to the murder of a young girl in a housing complex that serves a large resettlement of refugee families. This tragic event rallied the community to push for additional programs and services, and through the leadership of Mayor Cherie Wood and partnerships with the South Salt Lake Police Department, United Way of Salt Lake, the Granite School District, and the city recreation department, they launched an afterschool program in the community center, named after the young girl who lost her life, Hser Ner Moo. Since then, Promise South Salt Lake has grown to become a holistic, community-wide initiative operating in 14 centers across the city.

Recommendations

for connecting youth to supports in the community:

- ▶ Use data to guide choices for programs and services and be sure to have open communication with your partners when sharing that data. Don't be afraid to share when things aren't going well, as this is an opportunity to redirect programs to better meet a community's needs.
- ▶ Listen to and care about the wants and needs of your community, and be willing to change as needed.



Afterschool Alliance

afterschoolalliance.org