



Uncertain Times: Funding Insecurity Puts Afterschool Programs at Risk

For many families across America, afterschool programs provide a critical support that helps children do better in school and reassures parents that their children are safe and well cared for after the school day ends. Some 6.5 million children participate in afterschool programs, but an additional 15 million would participate if a program were available. Unfortunately, funding for afterschool has not nearly kept pace with demand. What has been the effect of recent budget cuts and stagnant funding on afterschool programs and the youth and families that they serve? The Afterschool Alliance's new national survey of afterschool providers, *Uncertain Times: Funding Insecurity Puts Afterschool Programs at Risk*, offers answers.

Program leaders report that they are serving a high need population, serving more children than expected, and struggling to maintain their funding. Nearly all respondents to this web-based survey say that more children in their communities could benefit from afterschool programs, if programs were available.

More than 1,600 afterschool program leaders responded to the survey, which also finds that:

- 75% of afterschool programs operated at or above maximum capacity during the 2005/2006 school year.
- 86% of respondents say that there are children in their community who need afterschool programs and don't have access to them.
- Afterschool programs are serving a high-need population. At more than half the programs surveyed, more than 60% of the students qualify for free or reduced price lunches.
- Nearly half of programs responding to the survey (47%) say that funding is down a little (23%) or a lot (24%) in the last two years. Another 30% say it is unchanged. 17% say it is up a little, and just 5% say it is up a lot.
- When programs are forced to make changes due to budget cuts or stagnation, the most common response is to increase the fees parents must pay.
- If programs are able to see an increase in funding, they are most likely to increase the number of students they serve.

In sum, *Uncertain Times* finds that many afterschool programs are fully subscribed but still unable to meet the demand, and that budget cuts and stagnation are taking a real toll on afterschool programs and the youth and families they serve.

Methodology: 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 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. For this first wave of data, 1,965 responses were reviewed. 337 of them did not provide sufficient data to be included in the final analysis; therefore the final sample was 1,628 responses which represent approximately 7,857 afterschool sites serving 1.5 million children. (Many respondents are responsible for multiple sites.)