



**News Release**  
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## **New Data: Summer Learning Programs Launch Amid Providers' Concerns About Student Well-Being, Long-Term Funding for Programs**

Washington, DC – Even as much of the nation's economy reopens and vaccination numbers climb, afterschool and summer learning programs continue to confront a range of challenges caused by the pandemic, according to the most recent survey of program providers commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance. As summer learning programs around the nation open, several key findings from the survey stand out. First, the great majority of programs will open in some form to serve children this summer, most offering in-person programming. Second, more than half of programs are expecting lower enrollment this summer due to COVID-19, and nearly half are having difficulty recruiting staff. Third, programs are keenly focused on addressing students' learning loss from the pandemic, as well as mental and emotional health problems resulting from months of isolation and fear.

The findings are from the fourth wave of an ongoing survey conducted for the Afterschool Alliance by Edge Research from February 19 to March 15, 2021, with responses from 1,235 program providers. Previous waves were conducted last year, from May to June, July to August, and September to October.

Even at the height of the pandemic, most afterschool programs remained open in some form, with 70% providing in-person or virtual programming in the spring of 2020, gradually increasing to 92% open in some form a year later, this spring. Similarly, the share of programs operating in-person in some capacity grew over the last year, from 19% last spring to 75% this spring. The share of summer programs operating in-person is also approaching pre-pandemic levels: Fully 89% of programs that are planning to offer summer programming will offer in-person sessions this summer – 64% in-person only, and 25% both in-person and virtually.

Funding concerns persist for afterschool and summer learning programs, although the American Rescue Plan – adopted in the final days of data collection – is likely to help address those concerns in the short term. Fifty-eight percent of program providers in the new survey express concern about long-term funding and the future of their programs.

“Afterschool and summer learning program providers have been unsung heroes of the pandemic,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant in releasing the data. “In community after community, they’ve reached out to families in need, helping students stay engaged and on track academically, checking on their social and emotional health, and providing meals and other supports. Now as summer dawns, programs are working to reconnect students with peers, teachers, adult role models, and mentors. Many are continuing with masking and social distancing requirements because the population they serve has no approved vaccine.”

“For many programs, federal COVID relief funding is critical,” Grant continued. “Key decisions about how those funds will be used are being made at the state and local levels. It’s particularly important that COVID relief dollars support the afterschool and summer learning programs that serve children of color and those from low-income families, who have been hardest hit by the pandemic. There has never been a summer when our children needed summer learning programs more than they do this year.”

Among other findings from the new survey:

- **Programs are providing a host of services, going beyond what happens in the hours after school or during an ordinary summer day.** Fifty-seven percent of respondents say their programs were providing or delivering meals or other resources to families this spring; 53% were connecting families to other community resources; and 57% were providing a safe physical space during the school day for students learning virtually.
- **Programs face challenges this summer.** More than half of program providers that plan to offer summer programming (52%) expect reduced enrollment this year due to COVID-19, while 44% anticipate difficulty hiring enough staff.
- **Providers worry about ability to meet student and family needs.** Even as 70% of providers report feeling optimistic about their programs going forward, 58% express concern about long-term funding and 26% are concerned about having to permanently close the program.
- **Large majorities report concerns about harms students suffered during the pandemic.** Eighty-one percent cite students’ learning loss as a concern, 83% cite students’ mental and emotional health, and 78% cite missed social connections for students.

Complete findings from the survey are available here, <http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/Afterschool-in-the-Time-of-COVID-19-Surveys.cfm>.

The data are based on an online survey of afterschool providers, conducted by Edge Research, that was fielded from February 19 to March 15, 2021. In all, 1,235 providers representing more than 6,400 program sites in 50 states and the District of Columbia participated.

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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. More information is available at [www.afterschoolalliance.org](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*