



News Release

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New Survey: Waitlists Grow as Summer Learning Programs Re-Open, and Providers Express Concern About Students' Learning and Well-Being

Washington, DC – Even though just two percent of summer learning programs are closed, there is not nearly enough capacity to serve the children who need them. More than half of programs serving students in person this summer report having a waitlist and operating at reduced capacity due to COVID-19 health and safety protocols. Four in five providers are concerned that children in their community who need summer programs are not able to access them. That is according to a new survey, commissioned by the Afterschool Alliance and conducted by Edge Research in June; it includes 937 providers representing more than 6,400 programs in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

More than four in five programs (83%) are open physically this summer. Those who run them express high levels of concern about their students. Seventy-seven percent of program providers report being very or extremely concerned that students' mental and emotional health is suffering and 74% that students are experiencing learning loss. Seven in ten (69%) report being very or extremely concerned that students are missing opportunities for social connections. While disturbingly high, those figures are down slightly from surveys conducted earlier in the pandemic.

While last summer, a much larger percentage of programs serving mostly children from high-income families were operating than programs serving children from mostly low-income families, that is no longer the case. Now, 87% of programs serving mostly low-income children are open in some capacity, compared to 76% of programs serving most higher-income students. But costs are rising for programs, which poses an equity problem and may make it more difficult for children from low-income families to attend.

“Summer learning programs are doing heroic work right now, serving children and youth who urgently need the academic and social supports they provide so skillfully,” Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant said in releasing the data. “This new survey contains good news, in particular that the vast majority of programs expect to open in person this fall. When we conducted this study in June, fewer than one in five programs reported receiving public COVID-19 relief funds. We believe that is picking up now, which is essential as providers report waiting lists and concerns about being able to meet the needs of their students and families. Ensuring that federal COVID relief funds get to summer and afterschool programs is critical to students' recovery from the pandemic.”

Among other findings from the new survey:

- **Programs are providing a host of services and activities this summer.** Ninety percent are providing academic enrichment; 86% time to interact with peers; 83% outdoor activities; 82%

opportunities for physical activity; and 77% time for young people to talk about their feelings and emotions with their peers or staff members. Two-thirds (65%) are providing snacks and/or meals.

- **The number of programs with wait lists has grown.** During the pandemic summer of 2020, 40% of programs that were physically open had wait lists. Today, 52% of programs do.
- **Cost has increased.** Forty-three percent of programs report that cost-per-child for in-person services has increased. Of those reporting a cost increase, 43% say the increase is 1 – 10% and 34% say it is 11 – 25%.
- **Summer program providers have concerns about meeting the needs of students and families.** Even as 80% of providers report feeling optimistic about the future, 77% report being extremely, very or somewhat concerned about their program’s future. More than half (57%) express concern about being able to hire enough staff and 45% about addressing the learning loss students are experiencing.
- **Nine in ten programs (89%) expect to open in the fall.** Eighty-four percent expect to open mostly or entirely in person; 6% on a hybrid schedule; 3% mostly or all virtually; and 7% of providers are unsure. This survey was conducted in June, before the Delta variant began infecting and sickening people across the United States.

Complete findings from the new 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 June 2 – June 28, 2021. It is the fifth wave of *Afterschool in the Time of COVID-19*. Previous waves of the ongoing survey, also conducted for the Afterschool Alliance by Edge Research, were conducted from February 19 to March 15 of this year and May to June, July to August, and September to October of 2020.

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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.