



NEWS RELEASE
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New Survey Finds Afterschool Funding Precarious

Fewer Than Half of Afterschool Programs Say Funding Fully Secure for Next Two Years, Just One in Five Has Secure Funding for Three to Five Years

As children across the country head back to school, and parents worry about whether their kids will be safe and supervised each afternoon when the school day ends, a new survey finds that many afterschool programs are fully subscribed but still unable to meet the demand in their communities. The web-based survey finds that budget cuts and stagnation are taking a toll on afterschool programs, and the youth and families they serve.

Uncertain Times: Funding Insecurity Puts Afterschool Programs at Risk finds that afterschool programs are serving a high need population, serving more children than expected, and struggling to maintain their funding. Nearly all respondents say that more children in their communities could benefit from afterschool programs, if they were available.

“By not providing stable, secure funding, we’re playing Russian roulette with the afterschool programs that are critical to our children and families,” warned Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “Quality afterschool programs are doing remarkable work helping students with homework, pairing them with mentors, engaging them in sports and fitness activities, and helping them explore new interests. But programs cannot serve all the children who need them when they are underfunded and have uncertain futures. We can, and must, do better.”

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 served 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.

“Every day, 14.3 million children leave school without a safe place to go,” Grant added. “In all, more than 15 million more kids would participate in afterschool programs, if only they were available. But federal funding shortfalls have squelched the growth of afterschool, and most states are unable to pick up the slack. Programs are left to cobble together support that too often is inadequate to meet the need.”

The bi-partisan *No Child Left Behind Act* authorizes \$2.5 billion for the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) afterschool initiative in FY 2007, but funding has fallen far behind authorized levels. Congress is on track to provide less than \$1 billion next year. If the initiative were funded at *No Child Left Behind* levels, 1.5 million more children would have access to quality afterschool programs.

Programs funded by 21st CCLC grants are more likely than programs without 21st CCLC funding to have at least 60% of their students qualify for free or reduced price lunches, according to **Uncertain Times**. Three in ten 21st CCLC programs (29%) operated above their maximum capacity in 2005/2006, and another 54% operated at maximum capacity.

Afterschool supporters are gearing up for the seventh annual *Lights On Afterschool*, the national rally for afterschool that will be held on October 12 this year. Organized by the Afterschool Alliance, this year's *Lights On Afterschool* will include some 7,500 events throughout the nation and at military bases around the world at which a million Americans will urge their leaders to support the afterschool programs that keep children safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

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.)

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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 by 2010. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.