



NEWS RELEASE
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New Survey: Recession Hurting Afterschool Programs And the Children & Families They Serve

More Hungry, Homeless Students & Fewer Resources for Programs to Use to Help

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Just as children in their communities need more help, afterschool program leaders across the country say they are being forced to increase fees and reduce staffing, activities and hours to cope with budget cuts and rising costs. Nearly all respondents to a survey of afterschool programs (95 percent) say the recession is affecting their communities, with 60 percent seeing more kids going hungry or families struggling to provide food for children, and half seeing increased homelessness. Yet afterschool programs are unable to provide as much help as children need because their budgets are down. Eighty-six percent of respondents say children in their communities need afterschool care and are unable to access it.

Nearly 1,500 afterschool leaders (1,447) responded to the web-based survey, conducted by the Afterschool Alliance in April and May. Respondents represent 8,587 afterschool sites serving 1.2 million children. According to “Uncertain Times 2009: Recession Imperiling Afterschool Programs and the Children They Serve,” three in five respondents say funding for their programs is down compared to two years ago, and more than one-third (36 percent) say it is down a lot. In response, programs are first cutting items like field trips, reducing activities, and reducing staff pay and benefits. But many also have been forced to add or increase fees (38 percent), reduce professional development (34 percent), increase staff/student ratios (28 percent), reduce the number of children they serve (28 percent), or reduce the hours or days they are open (25 percent). Twenty-two percent have reduced or eliminated summer programs in response to funding woes.

“This new survey documents a world of hurt all across the country,” said Afterschool Alliance Executive Director Jodi Grant. “We’re not protecting our kids from the economic pain, or even maintaining the safety nets they count on. Afterschool programs serve a high need population; two-thirds of students who attend these programs qualify for free or reduced price lunches. When programs must charge or raise fees or reduce hours, more children will be unsupervised and at risk after the school day ends. It is alarming that nearly half the respondents (47 percent) to our survey said their budgets are inadequate to meet the needs of students and families. We have to do better by our kids.”

A “Roadmap to Afterschool for All” released by the Afterschool Alliance in April found that there are afterschool programs for children whose parents and guardians can afford to pay tuition and fees, but our afterschool system is leaving behind millions of low-income children whose parents cannot pay. This assessment found that the federal government covers only eleven percent of the cost of afterschool, even though 29 percent of children in programs qualify for federal assistance. It concludes that a federal

investment of less than \$18 billion would give 5.6 million low-income youth access to the academic support, supervision, mentoring and fitness opportunities, snacks, and other benefits.

Yet federal funds are lacking. Funding for 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC), the chief federal funding stream for afterschool programs, is stalled at \$1.13 billion even though the *No Child Left Behind Act* authorized \$2.5 billion. President Obama's FY2010 budget proposal would flat fund 21st CCLCs.

"Quality afterschool programs do incredible work keeping kids safe, inspiring them to learn and helping working families," Grant added. "These programs also provide students with healthy snacks, sometimes dinner and breakfast, and a range of social services that students and families urgently need. But afterschool programs cannot serve all the children who need them when they are badly underfunded. Even in these tough economic times when there's tremendous pressure for resources, we have to find a way to do better. Investing in afterschool programs pays off over time in healthier, more successful students and youth."

The new survey also found that:

- With the recession still far from over, two in five respondents already find that transportation is a "significant barrier" to children being able to participate in their programs. More than one-third (37 percent) say fees or costs to parents are a significant barrier to participation.
- Nearly one-third of respondents say they would need to at least double capacity in order to serve all the children who need afterschool programs in their communities.
- Nearly nine in ten afterschool program leaders (89 percent) expect the recession to affect their programs in the 2009-2010 school year, and more than one-third expect the recession to very much affect it.
- Seven in ten respondents (69 percent) say funding is less than secure for the next one to two years, and 83 percent say it is not secure for the next three to five years.

Methodology: Uncertain Times 2009 used web-based survey software. The Afterschool Alliance emailed a link to the survey to more than 10,000 contacts in April 2009. 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. 1,834 responses were reviewed. 387 of them did not provide sufficient data to be included in the final analysis or were duplicates. Therefore, the final sample was 1,447 responses which represent approximately 8,587 afterschool sites serving more than 1.2 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. More information is available at www.afterschoolalliance.org.