



NEWS RELEASE
August 23, 2012

Contact: [Gretchen Wright](#)
202/371-1999

New Survey: Afterschool Programs Still Struggling in Recession's Aftermath

Minnesota Providers Fare Slightly Better in National Analysis But Overwhelmingly Report Unmet Need for Afterschool Programs

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As the nation's children head back to school, a new survey released today by the Afterschool Alliance holds tough lessons about the outlook for afterschool programs: Amid a rocky economic climate and budget-tightening at the local, state and federal levels, many afterschool programs face shrinking resources and uncertain prospects even as they are already struggling to meet the needs of children and families in their communities.

In Minnesota, afterschool programs are experiencing the effects of a challenging economy but are faring slightly better than afterschool programs nationally. However, there is significant concern about the financial outlook and the inability to reach all children who need afterschool. Based on responses from 59 program providers in the state—of which 70 percent are located in urban communities, 16 percent in suburban communities and 26 percent in rural communities—Minnesota afterschool programs overwhelmingly report that there are children in their communities who need afterschool programs but are unable to access them. Also, more than nine in ten afterschool providers report that their communities are deeply affected by tough economic times, and nearly half say that their budgets are inadequate to meet the needs of their communities.

More than a third of afterschool programs (36 percent) report that their budgets are in worse shape today than at the height of the recession in 2008, a result that's three points lower than the national figure (39 percent). More than half of Minnesota programs (53 percent) report that their funding is down "a little or a lot" from three years ago, nine points below the national result (62 percent). Despite bucking national trends, that leaves Minnesota with many afterschool programs—which provide children with a safe and supervised space, hands-on educational opportunities, and access to homework help, mentors and other caring adults—unable to fully support the children in their communities who are most in need of afterschool now, and without the financial security to do so in the future.

Funding pressures have forced programs to make difficult decisions. The top three changes instituted by Minnesota afterschool programs as a result of funding cuts or budget stagnation are: reduction of staff hours; elimination or reduction of field trips; and staff layoffs and reduction in the number of program sites.

The results are part of the Afterschool Alliance's [*Uncertain Times*](#) survey project, the only research effort to examine how the economy affects afterschool programs. The Afterschool Alliance previously conducted *Uncertain Times* surveys in 2006 and 2009.

“While it’s encouraging to see Minnesota report better numbers in certain areas than some of its afterschool peers nationally, that doesn’t mean that the state’s afterschool providers are on solid ground,” said Lisa Wetzel of the Kids World School Age Care in Faribault, and an Afterschool Ambassador for Minnesota for the Afterschool Alliance. “There are children and families in Minnesota who need and deserve the support of afterschool programs but are getting shut out. That shows that we aren’t making a full investment in afterschool programs, and the future for Minnesota’s children may not be as promising as it should be.”

Among other key findings of the new *Uncertain Times* survey:

- More than nine in ten Minnesota programs (95 percent) report that children in their communities need afterschool care but are unable to access it, seven points higher than the national result (88 percent).
- Nearly half (49 percent) report that their budgets are inadequate to meet the needs of their communities, eight points lower than the national result (57 percent).
- More than a third (35 percent) report that they would need to at least double their capacity to meet the needs of all the kids in their communities, 11 points higher than the national result (24 percent).
- Twenty-one percent report that a loss of funding caused major cutbacks or shut down sites, five points higher than the national result (16 percent).
- More than eight in ten programs (86 percent) anticipate that the challenging economic climate will affect their programs during the 2012-2013 school year, one point higher than the national result (85 percent).
- Minnesota afterschool programs serve a high-needs population, with an average of 80 percent of children qualifying for free or reduced-price lunches, 19 percent with special needs or learning differences, and 26 percent classified as Limited English Proficient.

“The latest *Uncertain Times* results are a painful reminder that the nation’s slow road to economic recovery is a particularly rough journey for the afterschool programs that children, families and educators rely on,” said Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “These programs are not a luxury; they’re vital to a bright future for children all across the country.”

“In the midst of these harsh economic realities, afterschool program leaders are being forced to make painful decisions,” Grant added. “The students they serve are at risk of being denied access to afterschool programs, which keep kids safe, inspire them to learn and help working families.

Afterschool providers need enough resources to help all the students and families who need them. We are far from that funding level today.”

Policy recommendations by the Afterschool Alliance to help speed up recovery for afterschool programs include increasing support for 21st Century Community Learning Centers, the only federal funding stream dedicated to before-school, afterschool and summer learning programs; increasing funding for the Child Care Development Block Grant to provide child care vouchers to more eligible families; allowing existing federal funding streams—such as those for STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) skill-building and youth health initiatives—to help support afterschool programs; and including language in the Workforce Reinvestment Act and the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act to help before-school, afterschool and summer programs reach middle school and high school students.

To view the full 2012 survey, *Uncertain Times: Afterschool Programs Still Struggling in Today's Economy*, go [here](#).

[Uncertain Times 2012](#) used Web-based survey software to poll more than 26,000 contacts between April 25 and June 8, 2012. Results are based on 1,012 survey responses, representing 4,947 afterschool sites serving more than 567,470 children in urban (45 percent), suburban (30 percent) and rural (31 percent) communities across the United States.

####

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.