



NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: [Gretchen Wright](#)
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New Survey: Afterschool Programs Struggling in Recession's Aftermath

Programs in Minority Communities Particularly Hard Hit

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. Programs that principally serve minority communities have been especially hard hit.

Nearly two in five afterschool programs (39 percent) report that their budgets are in worse shape today than at the height of the recession in 2008, and more than three in five (62 percent) report that their funding is down "a little or a lot" from three years ago. That leaves 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.

The situation is even more grim for afterschool programs serving predominantly African-American and Latino children. Close to nine in ten of the children in these programs qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program. In these high-poverty environments, 68 percent of majority African-American programs and 65 percent of majority Latino programs report that their funding is down from three years ago. Even in communities where local economies and program funding are faring better, program leaders express significant concern about their financial outlook and their inability to reach all children who need afterschool.

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.

"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. What's particularly discouraging is that programs most in need—those serving minority

and high-poverty communities—are hurting the most. That means 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.”

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

- Nearly nine in ten programs (88 percent) report that children in their communities need afterschool care but are unable to access it.
- More than half of programs (57 percent) report that their budgets are inadequate to meet the needs of their communities, close to a 10-point increase from 2009.
- Nearly one in four programs (24 percent) report that they would need to at least double capacity to meet the needs of all the kids in their communities.
- Sixteen percent of programs report that a loss of funding caused major cutbacks or shut down sites, up from 14 percent in 2009.
- More than eight in ten programs (85 percent) anticipate that the challenging economic climate will affect their programs during the 2012-2013 school year.

“In the midst of these harsh economic realities, afterschool program leaders are being forced to make painful decisions,” Grant added. “Many must eliminate field trips and staff positions, and reduce the variety of activities offered, just to reach more kids or to simply keep the lights on and doors open. But shrinking their offerings inevitably harms the students who count on these programs the most. 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.

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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.