



**News Release**  
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## **Five Years Later, Afterschool Pandemic Recovery Is Strong, But Most Programs Face Formidable Financial and Other Challenges**

### *High Number of Providers Express Concern for Students They Serve*

Washington, DC – Nearly five years later, a majority of afterschool programs across the United States are finally able to serve as many or more students as they served before the pandemic – but concern about the well-being of their students is high and growing, as are worries about the prospects for keeping their programs open. Those are among the findings from [an online survey](#) of 1,223 afterschool program providers, conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance from October 29 to December 10, 2024.

More than half of afterschool programs (53%) have a waiting list – but students who are able to access them are receiving a range of essential supports. Nearly nine in ten afterschool programs (89%) are providing academic enrichment; 84% are offering meals and snacks, as well as time for students to connect with peers; 80% are providing physical activity; and 74% are offering opportunities both to learn STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) and to build life skills.

A stunning 93% of providers report concerns about the mental and emotional health of students in their programs, with 73% extremely or very concerned. Similarly, 85% of providers say students in their programs are facing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Those figures are all higher than they were just a year before.

“This survey reveals a field doing vitally important work, but under real stress,” says Jodi Grant, executive director of the Afterschool Alliance. “Many students are struggling, and afterschool programs help by keeping them safe and inspiring them to learn while giving working parents peace of mind that their kids are safe, supervised, and learning after the school day ends. But there aren’t nearly enough afterschool programs and many that are open today could close tomorrow. It’s alarming that 81% of respondents express concern about their program’s sustainability and future; 63% are concerned about losing funding; and 44% fear having to close permanently – all figures that are higher than when we asked the same questions a year earlier. We know that all federal spending is being scrutinized now, but lawmakers should recognize that out-of-school-time programs help students succeed in school and in life. We need dramatically greater investments in afterschool and summer learning.”

Among other findings from the new survey:

- **Funding challenges are not distributed evenly.** Providers at programs serving mostly children in families with low incomes and children of color are more likely than others to have high levels of concern about their program’s funding. Urban and rural program providers are more likely than providers in suburban communities to say they are extremely or very concerned about the sustainability of their program.
- **Concerns for students are broad-based.** In addition to 93% of respondents expressing concern about the mental and emotional health of their students and 85% concern that their students are facing ACEs, more than four in five respondents say they are concerned that their students are experiencing learning loss (83%) and food insecurity (81%).
- **Staffing remains a significant concern** for most afterschool program providers, with 83% concerned about their ability to pay staff a livable wage and benefits; and 79% about finding and retaining staff.
- **Costs continue to rise.** Two in five programs (42%) report an increase in their program’s cost-per-student in the past year. Nine percent report a decrease in the cost-per-student.
- **Few programs accessed federal pandemic relief.** Only 14% of programs report accessing pandemic relief funds – but programs that did use those funds to hire staff, serve more students, and expand program offerings and hours. With those funds ending, nearly 1 in 4 programs that accessed them say they will now need to close one or more sites, 14% say they will need to start charging fees to parents, and 28% will need to increase the fees they charge parents.
- **Screen time is a major concern.** Nearly nine in ten afterschool program providers (87%) report concern about the negative effects of unproductive screen time on their students’ well-being, including 63% who are extremely or very concerned about it.

Complete findings from the new survey are available here:

<https://afterschoolalliance.org/documents/A-Mix-of-Highs-and-Lows-Wave-11.pdf>.

This online survey of afterschool providers is the 11<sup>th</sup> in a series begun in response to the pandemic that has evolved to explore new and ongoing challenges facing the afterschool field. It includes 1,223 afterschool program providers representing more than 9,200 programs across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. All the surveys in the series were conducted by Edge Research for the Afterschool Alliance. The first was fielded in the spring of 2020; the most recent in late 2024.

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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](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org).*