

Afterschool and Summer Learning Workforce Policy Recommendations

These policy recommendations are intended to help more young people access quality afterschool and summer programming. By equipping staff with the skills and training they need and want, helping staff build their economic security as they advance in the field, and ultimately making the afterschool and summer learning field a more competitive career option, afterschool and summer programs can have viable solutions for staff recruitment and retention.

It will be essential to ensure that all policies reflect an equitable approach, are culturally relevant, are grounded in youth development principles, and are applicable to the unique circumstances of different communities. Policies should be inclusive of youth voice and afterschool and summer staff voice, and take into account the needs of historically marginalized communities, including programs reaching families with low-incomes, families of color, families of children with special needs, families of native and indigenous descent, and families in rural communities.

The recommendations encompass funding and support for programs, research, professional growth, career pathways, and increasing the empowerment and visibility of afterschool and youth development staff. They also speak to the need for the infrastructure to do this work as part of a coordinated and sustainable approach.

1. Create the conditions that will provide the foundation for a good job.

- Develop and enact policies that pay staff a livable and competitive wage. Strategies include:
 - Increase federal afterschool and summer funding through 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), as well as state level afterschool and summer funding, to ensure staff are paid a living wage, provided benefits including paid sick time, and are fairly compensated, while serving the same or more students in need.
 - Support federal, state, and local efforts building off CCDF COVID relief funding to sustain increased reimbursement, staff pay, and benefit increases.
 - Ensure school-age quality care is appropriately included in all state child care quality improvement systems.
 - Utilize 21st CCLC grant request for proposals (RFPs) at the state level to encourage and incentivize livable and competitive wages and wage floors for different job positions.
 - Through mechanisms such as federal non-regulatory guidance and technical assistance and state RFPs and technical assistance, encourage braiding of funds that may allow staff more opportunities for full-time positions and/or year-round work for staff that would otherwise only work during the summer or school year.

- Replicate policies such as [WI Partner UP](#) which combine state, business, and parent contributions to pay providers, including school-age providers, at the true cost of care.
- Invest in research that will provide critical information to identify gaps in services and help the field generate strategies and solutions to increase the appeal of the afterschool and summer learning workforce to individuals entering the workforce and those already in the workforce, considering both short-term jobs and long-term careers.
 - Support research agendas that identify who makes up the afterschool and summer learning field, employment trends of the field, long-term benefits of those employed, and working conditions of the field.
 - Ensure that the required studies on the true cost of child care programs in state CCDF policies include school-age program providers, including breakouts of cost data based on different levels of quality, according to quality rating and improvement systems.
 - Fund research that quantifies, at the state level, the cost of quality afterschool and summer learning programs.
 - Research should address the cost of targeted professional development required to offer high-quality topic specific programming such as STEM, arts, and sports.
 - Research should identify work quality conditions that reduce turnover, increase job satisfaction, and contribute to overall program quality. This includes, but is not limited to, levels of staff pay, increases in pay and recognition commensurate with knowledge and experience, and professional development to keep staff developing within their organizations.

2. Provide the supports that will help staff perform well and achieve economic stability.

- Through mechanisms such as federal non-regulatory guidance, state RFPs, and technical assistance, promote and enhance allowable expenditures for staff wellbeing supports that help improve staff performance and positively affect their overall wellness.
 - Supports can include health and mental health services, peer support groups, paid sick time, and subsidized child care for staff.
- Expand existing and new federal initiatives around [care worker](#), [child care worker](#), and [educator](#) mental health and [workforce](#) supports to explicitly include school-age child care and afterschool staff.
 - Initiatives can include public service loan forgiveness opportunities as well as coaching and mentoring opportunities.
- Replicate state and local level policies to allow children of school-age child care staff and afterschool program staff to access prioritized and/or subsidized slots under the

applicable funding stream (ie. CCDF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, 21st CCLC, state funding streams) regardless of income eligibility criteria such as those in CCDF, which cap eligibility at 85% of the state median income.

- Replicate state level initiatives on [staff wellness supports](#) and shared services agreements.

3. Provide supports that will help staff advance and develop their skills.

- Ensure that federal funding streams for afterschool and summer include sufficient state set asides to provide funding for professional development and technical assistance. Across funding streams, allowable professional development and technical assistance should include youth development, content specific programming, organizational capacity, licensing supports, and any other training needed by programs to help staff be successful in their positions.
 - Within 21st CCLC, sustain or increase the 5% state set-aside for professional development and technical assistance to ensure state education agencies partner with qualified intermediaries and partners, as well as federally funded technical assistance centers, to offer a wide range of robust quality supports to programs and staff.
 - Within CCDF establish/restore a specific school-age quality set aside, while at a minimum maintaining the 9% for all quality activities.
 - Through mechanisms such as federal non-regulatory guidance and technical assistance and state RFPs and technical assistance, encourage braiding across state level set asides for professional development and technical assistance to provide coordinated and leveraged approaches to a wide range of high-quality staff training and programming.
- Ensure federal and state level grantees provide paid professional development and planning time for school-age child care staff and afterschool and summer program staff.
 - Across funding streams, including CHIPS childcare, Youth Mentoring, Teenage Pregnancy Prevention, and Full Service Community Schools, require a percentage set-aside for professional development.
 - Update 21st CCLC non-regulatory guidance to include paid time for professional development as an allowable, and encouraged, use of funds.
 - Sustain and expand “informal educator” training and professional development opportunities for afterschool program staff through a variety of federal government agencies including Department of Defense (Cyberpatriots), NASA, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Park Service, and Institute of Museum and Library Services.
- Support robust career pathways to enter into and grow within the afterschool and summer learning field.

- Establish and fully fund registered youth apprenticeship models, through the Department of Labor and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, that allow prospective and current afterschool staff paid opportunities, benefits, and other supports to follow their career pathway.
- Establish and support policies and guidance that enable different staff hiring mechanisms to alleviate the pressure on staffing for content-specific programming in areas like STEM. Formalizing partnerships with institutions like universities, professional associations, museums, science centers, etc. could bring in college students, experts in the field, retirees, etc. to work part-time in afterschool and summer programs. For example, see <https://www.akafterschool.org/stem-internship>.
- Ensure state policies in childcare licensing requirements reflect school-age specific needs, in particular the education, training, age, and experience qualifications for all levels of staff, to help them perform their roles at high levels of quality.
- Implement policies in afterschool funding streams and other workforce development opportunities that pay for school-age, afterschool, and other field related high-quality credentials. Examples that can be leveraged include the TEACH grants and scholarship models in New York and Michigan.
- Ensure professional development requirements for staff engaged in advancing their career pathway always include paid professional development time.
- Provide more equitable opportunities for staff to earn meaningful credits, credentials, or other forms of career pathway opportunities (including bonuses, raises, etc.) and obtain leadership positions, to ensure a diverse workforce at all staffing levels. Include resources and incentives that make credentials and career pathway opportunities more accessible and transparent.
- Ensure afterschool program staff are eligible and supported in accessing teacher or child care educational supports, including but not limited to continuing education credits.

4. Take actions to ensure employees are empowered, engaged, and have agency and demonstrate to staff that their contributions and voices are valued and deserve to be uplifted and amplified.

- Mandate afterschool field representation from National Afterschool Association state affiliates and statewide afterschool networks, or other similar entities, on federal and state task forces, committees, and other policy bodies focused on career pathways and workforce development.
- Establish standard occupational codes for the afterschool field to be able to track and share data on the field as a whole.
- Continue to apply and integrate new findings from surveys and research studies on afterschool and summer learning, such as the Power of Us survey, America After 3PM, and provider surveys, to inform legislation, regulation, and policy.