



www.afterschoolalliance.org

# Afterschool Alert

## ISSUE BRIEF

Issue Brief No. 27

April 2007

*“In today’s world where both parents often work, children are most likely to commit crimes or be victimized after school or before parents return home.”*

**--Mike Fahey, Mayor, Omaha, NE**

## **Afterschool Programs: Keeping Kids — and Communities — Safe**

### **Rising violence among youth is a concern nationwide.**

After 14 years of decline, cities across the nation are reporting spikes in crime rates, which many law enforcement officials attribute to decreased federal spending on crime prevention and more juveniles becoming involved in violent crimes.

- According to *USA Today*: “Tight local budgets and reduced federal funding for police, along with new anti-terrorism duties, have stretched police departments and led to cuts in community programs for youths. Historically low crime rates in recent years often have been linked to a booming economy. Now, with the economy slowing, officials in several cities are tying poverty and financial uncertainty to rising crime, particularly among juveniles.”<sup>i</sup>
- The FBI’s annual Uniform Crime Report for 2005 reflects a rise in violent crime throughout the country compared to 2004. Nationwide, the United States experienced increases in three of the four violent crime categories: homicides (3.4 percent), robberies (3.9 percent) and aggravated assaults (1.8 percent). These statistics reflect the largest single-year percentage increase in violent crime in 14 years.<sup>ii</sup>
- Of all violent crime arrests in 2005, 16 percent (or 2 million arrests) involved juveniles under age 18. Twenty-nine percent (or just over 3 million) arrests involved youth ages 18 to 24.<sup>iii</sup>

On school days, 3-6 PM are the peak hours for teens to commit crimes, be in or cause car crashes, be victims of crime, and smoke, drink and use drugs.

*It is no coincidence that the reversal of the crime rate comes on the heels of the cuts in federal programs that prevent crime and violence.*

— David Kass, executive director, Fight Crime: Invest in Kids

### **Young people face a number of dangers during the hours after school.**

- There are approximately 20 to 25 hours per week that children are out of school while most parents are at work, creating an “after-school gap.”<sup>iv</sup>
- Self-care and boredom can increase the likelihood that a young person will experiment with drugs and alcohol by as much as 50 percent.<sup>v</sup> Youth tend to develop patterns of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use - or nonuse - from ages 12 to 15.<sup>vi</sup>

- Teens who do not participate in afterschool programs are nearly three times more likely to skip classes at school than teens who do participate. They are three times more likely to use marijuana or other drugs, and also more likely to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes and engage in sexual activity than teens not in afterschool programs.<sup>vii</sup>

Afterschool programs are a powerful antidote to youth crime:

- They provide a safe haven that keeps kids away from violence.
- They provide an alternative to gangs and street life, allowing kids to develop new skills and interact positively with peers.
- They offer youth hope and opportunities, offsetting the sense of nihilism can cause youth to turn to crime.
- They contribute to economic opportunity by providing academic support and job skills.

### **Afterschool programs decrease crime and increase student safety.**

- A study of the impact of the Bayview Safe Haven afterschool program in San Francisco found:<sup>viii</sup>
  - The crime problems in the area of the Bayview Safe Haven recreation center fell, with a police officer noting, “Calls for [police] service have gone down — there used to be probably three or four times what they are now.”
  - Compared to non-participants with similar profiles, program youth were significantly less likely to be suspended from school; participants with histories of involvement in the juvenile justice system were significantly less likely to recidivate; and participants without such involvement were significantly less likely to commit a first offense.
- A study of afterschool programs established through the California Juvenile Crime Prevention Demonstration Project in 12 high-risk California communities found that, compared to when they started the program, crime and

delinquency-related behavior among participants declined significantly after students completed the program. Vandalism and stealing dropped by two-thirds, violent acts and carrying a concealed weapon fell by more than half, and arrests and being picked up by the police were cut in half.<sup>ix</sup>

- In the three years after Baltimore’s Police Department opened a Police Activities League (PAL) afterschool program in one high-crime neighborhood, juvenile crime in the neighborhood dropped nearly 10 percent, and the risk of children and teens becoming crime victims was cut nearly in half. While juvenile victimization rates were coming down for all Baltimore juveniles, the rate in the area served by the PAL program came down nearly three times as fast as it did for the city as a whole.<sup>x</sup>
- In New York City, afterschool programs started by Boys and Girls Clubs in selected public housing developments saw significant drops in drug use, presence of crack cocaine and police reports of drug activity. The decreases: drug activity 22 percent; juvenile arrests 13 percent; and vandalism 12.5 percent. At the same time, parental involvement increased, compared to public housing developments not selected to implement the afterschool programs.<sup>xi</sup>
- For years, California has been a leader in funding afterschool, and has shown impressive results through programs such as San Diego’s “6 to 6” Extended Day Program, LA’s BEST, After School All Stars, and Woodcraft Rangers.<sup>xii,xiii</sup> At the

same time, California's juvenile arrest rate dropped 42 percent from 1995 to 2005, while its youth incarceration rate dropped 73 percent during the same period.<sup>xiv</sup>

- A new study of LA's BEST illustrates the power and reach of afterschool in keeping kids safe from crime, with benefits that extend beyond the schoolyard and into the community. Not only are children and youth in the program 30 percent less likely to participate in criminal activities than their peers who do not attend the program, but drop-out rates among participants are 20 percent lower than the overall district drop-out rate. The study also shows the wisdom of financially supporting afterschool: for every dollar invested in the L.A.'s BEST program, the city of Los Angeles saves \$2.50 in crime-related costs.<sup>xv</sup>

### **Youth need more support.**

The U.S. Conference of Mayors 10-Point Plan recommends fully funding 21st Century Community Learning Centers and other afterschool programs.<sup>xvi</sup>

- "We're a rural area, so kids have little to do. ...According to the Portland-area Drug Enforcement Administration, with one afterschool activity, 70 percent of youth are less likely to get involved in illegal drugs or bad behavior. With two activities, that percentage increases to 90," said Shirley Morgan, Village Police Athletic League president.<sup>xvii</sup>
- Fifty-five percent of Chicago high school students say there are no safe places to go after school.<sup>xviii</sup>
- Two out of three young people nationwide wish there were more places they could hang out where they could feel safe and have fun.<sup>xix</sup>
- More than one-third of California teens said that there are not enough supervised after school activities in their areas that interest them. Of these, 77 percent said they would be likely to participate if interesting activities were available to them.<sup>xx</sup>

### **America's police chiefs say afterschool programs are essential to preventing crime.**

- Rochester, New York Mayor Robert Duffy, a former police chief, says graduation rates and homicide rates have a direct connection. He noted, "One hundred percent of our street level drug dealers are high-school dropouts."<sup>xxi</sup>
- According to a survey of police chiefs by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids:<sup>xxii</sup>
  - Eighty-six percent agreed that "expanding after-school and child care programs like Head Start will greatly reduce youth crime and violence."
  - Nine out of ten police chiefs agreed with the statement: "If America does not make greater investments in after-school and educational child care programs to help children and youth now, we will pay far more later in crime, welfare and other costs."
  - Sixty-nine percent of police chiefs said "after-school and child care programs" are the most effective strategies for reducing juvenile crime, preferable to trying juveniles as adults, hiring more police and putting metal detectors in schools.
- LA Police Chief William Bratton credits afterschool programs, such as LA's BEST, for the increased safety in the community: "The future of this city is dependent on its ability to keep these young people safe. If they're not safe, they're not going to learn. [Afterschool programs] give our young children an opportunity to be safe."<sup>xxiii</sup>

### **Some communities are enhancing juvenile delinquency prevention efforts before problems escalate:**

- Tulsa, OK – Mayor calls for more mentors; Bank of America donates \$41,000 to afterschool programs to help combat the “growing gang problem.”<sup>xxiv</sup>
- Yonkers, NY – City anti-gang coalition announces \$77,000 for new county-funded afterschool program. The \$77,000 grant will fund "Achieving Success," an afterschool program, through the county Department of Social Services. The program will provide computer and other skills training and tutoring for at least 60 kids 13 to 17 years old.<sup>xxv</sup>
- Fairfax County, VA - With \$2 million in funding that grew from a federal seed grant worth \$516,000, Fairfax police have created a holistic approach to combating the growth of gangs in the area that has proven to be successful. Fifty-one percent of the money goes to police work and 49 percent to intervention and prevention. Part of the prevention strategy includes placing five-day afterschool programs in all 26 of the counties middle schools. Since the implementation of the new strategy, serious gang crime activity has dropped 39 percent and continues to decline.<sup>xxvi</sup>

### **Youth crime is a failure of adults.**

It is too soon to determine whether the recent spike in youth crime is the start of a rising trend, but our nation must declare youth crime unacceptable and demand more support for our children and youth. Each young person who ends up in the criminal justice system, or is the victim of violent crime, represents society’s failure to provide the resources they need to stay safe and grow into a productive, successful adults. Prevention is key to keeping kids on the right track. More juveniles are arrested for curfew violations than for all four offenses in the FBI’s Violent Crime Index combined. Violent crimes account for fewer than 10 percent of all juvenile offenses and the majority of offenses consist of aggravated assault, curfew violations, vandalism and disorderly conduct. Investing in quality afterschool programs is an absolute necessity for our communities where more than 14 million children and youth have no safe place to go after school that offers the enrichment or recreational activities they need to succeed. The data are clear -- afterschool programs can prevent young people from committing and becoming victims of crime.

---

<sup>i</sup> Johnson, K. (2006, July 12). Cities grapple with crime by kids. *USA Today*.

<sup>ii</sup> Police Executive Research Forum. (2006, October). *A Gathering Storm—Violent Crime in America*.

<sup>iii</sup> Butts, J.A. & Snyder, H. N., (2006, November). Too soon to tell: deciphering recent trends in youth violence. *Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago*, Issue Brief #110.

<sup>iv</sup> Chait, B.R. & Sabattini, L. (2006, December). After-school worries: Tough on parents; bad for business. *Brandeis University’s Women’s Studies Research Center/Catalyst Study*.

<sup>v</sup> National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VIII: Teens and Parents. (2003). *The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University*. Retrieved on March 22, 2007 from [http://www.casacolumbia.org/pdshopprov/files/2003\\_Teen\\_Survey\\_8\\_19\\_03.pdf](http://www.casacolumbia.org/pdshopprov/files/2003_Teen_Survey_8_19_03.pdf)

<sup>vi</sup> Indiana Prevention Resource Center. (1998). *Critical Hours and Critical Years: Precision Targeting in Prevention*. Bailey, W. J. Retrieved from [http://www.drugs.indiana.edu/publications/iprc/newsline/indiana\\_data.html](http://www.drugs.indiana.edu/publications/iprc/newsline/indiana_data.html).

<sup>vii</sup> YMCA of the USA. (2001, March) *After school for America's teens*.

- 
- <sup>viii</sup> Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California. (2004). *California's next after-school challenge: Keeping high school teens off the street and on the right track.*
- <sup>ix</sup> Fight Crime: Invest in Kids New York. (2002). *New York's after-school choice: The prime time for juvenile crime or youth enrichment and achievement.*
- <sup>x</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xi</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>xii</sup> Afterschool Alliance (September 2006). *Evaluations Backgrounder: A summary of formal evaluations of the academic impact of afterschool programs.*
- <sup>xiii</sup> Afterschool Alliance (January 2007). *Evaluations Backgrounder: A summary of formal evaluations of afterschool programs on behavior, safety and family life.*
- <sup>xiv</sup> Kelly, J. (2007, March). Youth crime mystery: California's huge drop raises questions, but who cares? *Youth Today.* 16(3). p6.
- <sup>xv</sup> UCLA National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing, June 2000, December 2005 and September 2007.
- <sup>xvi</sup> U.S. Conference of Mayors. (2007, January). *Mayors' 10-point plan: Strong cities, strong families, for a strong America.* Washington, D.C.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Puterbaugh, C. (2007, January 4). PAL aims to be friendly, safe haven for children. *The Oregonian.*
- <sup>xviii</sup> Goerge, R.M.; Chaskin, R.; Gultinan, S. (2006). What high school students in the Chicago public schools do in their out-of-school time: 2003-2005, Chapin Hall Working Paper. *Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.*
- <sup>xix</sup> America's Promise, The Alliance for Youth. (2006). *A report from America's Promise Alliance: every child every promise, turning failure into action.*
- <sup>xx</sup> Fight Crime: Invest in Kids California. (2006, May). *California survey of teens. Teens at risk: incidence of high-risk behaviors: Crime, gangs, drugs; need for after-school programs.*
- <sup>xxi</sup> Police Executive Research Forum. (2006, October). *A gathering storm—violent crime in America.*
- <sup>xxii</sup> Fight Crime: Invest in Kids. (1999). *Poll of police chiefs.* Retrieved March 9, 2007, from [http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/police\\_chiefs\\_poll\\_report.pdf](http://www.fightcrime.org/reports/police_chiefs_poll_report.pdf)
- <sup>xxiii</sup> Walton, A. (2007, September 6). Study Finds After-School Program Reduces Juvenile Crime. *City News Service.*
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Jozapavicius, J. (2007, January 6). Tulsa mayor calls for mentors to help solve city's gang problem. *The Associated Press State and Local Wire.*
- <sup>xxv</sup> Fitz-Gibbon, J. (2006, November 19). Yonkers anti-gang coalition hosts youth conference. *The Journal News (Westerchester County, NY).*
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Jackman, T. (2006, July 20). Task force tackling gangs from all angles; localities report drop in incidents in first 3 years. *The Washington Post.*