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After-School Programs

Introduction

After-school hours are a critical time for youth. That time can represent either an opportunity to learn and grow, through quality after-school programs, or a time of risk to youth's health and safety.

The after-school hours are the peak time for juvenile crime and risky behaviors such as alcohol and drug use. Most experts agree that after-school programs offer a healthy and positive alternative. These programs keep kids safe, improve academic achievement and help relieve the stresses on today's working families. They can serve as important youth violence prevention and intervention strategies.

Yet most youth do not have access to after-school programs. Every day, at least eight million children and youth are left alone and unsupervised once the school bell rings.¹ While nine in 10 Americans think that all youth should have access to after-school programs, two-thirds say it is difficult to find programs locally. With more and more children growing up in homes with two working parents or a single working parent, today's families can benefit from the safe, structured learning opportunities that after-school programs provide.

Overview

After-school programs are defined as safe, structured activities that convene regularly in the hours after school and offer activities to help children learn new skills, and develop into responsible adults. Activities may cover topics such as technology, reading, math, science and the arts. Programs may also offer new experiences such as community service, internships or tutoring and mentoring opportunities.

Without structured, supervised activities in the after-school hours, youth are at greater risk of being victims of crime, or participating in anti-social behaviors. In fact, juveniles are at the highest risk of being a victim of violence between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m.² And the peak hour for juvenile crime is from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m., the first hour that most students are dismissed from school.³

Stop youth violence before it starts

Toll-Free: 1-866-SAFEYOUTH (1-866-723-3968) **TTY:** 1-800-243-7012 **FAX:** 301-562-1001

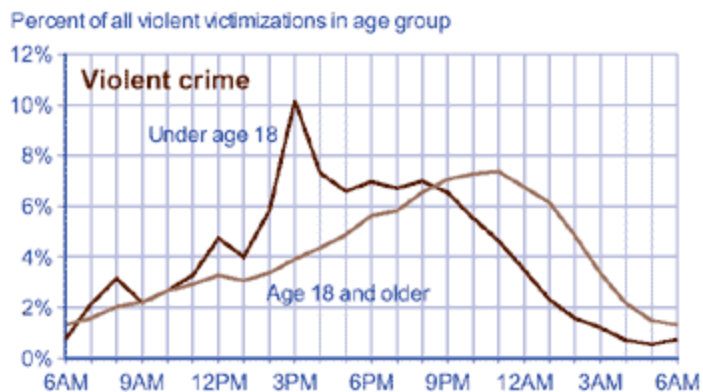


Image URL: www.ncjrs.org/html/ojdp/9911_1/images/5_1.gif

Other safety issues surface in the after-school hours as well. Students who spend no time in extracurricular activities, such as those offered in after-school programs, are 49 percent more likely to have used drugs and 37 percent more likely to become teen parents than are those students who spend one to four hours per week in extracurricular activities.

Beyond serving a significant role by simply offering youth a safe haven, after-school programs offer children and youth opportunities to learn new skills such as conflict resolution, prepare for a successful career, improve grades and develop relationships with caring adults. These skills can be critical in helping youth develop in positive ways and to avoid behavior problems and conflict.

The link between after-school program participation and violence prevention and increased achievement among youth is increasingly evident as new research emerges. [After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart](#), a joint report from the [U.S. Department of Education](#) and [U.S. Department of Justice](#), shows that students in after-school programs exhibit fewer behavioral problems, better ability to handle conflicts and improved self-confidence.

In Los Angeles, a UCLA evaluation of an after-school initiative called [LA's BEST](#) (www.lasbest.org) found that students with higher levels of participation in LA's BEST program had better school attendance and higher scores on standardized tests of mathematics, reading and language arts. [A study by RAND of fourth graders in Foundations, Inc. after-school programs](#) (www.foundations-inc.org) reported that children in the programs outperformed their counterparts on academic achievement tests.

Despite the tendency to think of older children as able to take care of themselves, studies show that after-school programs benefit youth at all levels, from elementary to high school. In fact, middle and high school students may often benefit most from these programs. A recent survey of high school students, for example, revealed that students in after-school programs had greater expectations for the future and were more interested in school than their peers.

Many government agencies and nonprofit organizations have begun to promote after-school programs as a positive resource for youth in the past several years. However, while the concept seems to be taking off, the need for programs is far from being met. More than 28 million school-age children have parents who work outside the home, and that number is growing. Applications for after-school program funds from the federal government's [21st Century Community Learning Centers](#) (www.ed.gov/programs/21stccclc/index.html) initiative outpace the resources available by two to one.

While the initiative has grown exponentially in the past four years (from \$40 million in 1998 to \$846 million in 2001), the U.S. Department of Education had to deny 1,000 high-quality proposals for after-school funding in the last grant cycle. This gap reflected a need in 2000 that was more than double the available resources.

Publications

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

www.doc.gov

- [Who's Minding the Kids? Child Care Arrangements: Fall 1995](#) (October 2000)
www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/p70-70.pdf
About 7 million children 5 to 14 years old were regularly left unsupervised in 1995 while their parents were at work or away for other reasons. The report shows the number and characteristics of children in different child-care arrangements, including those in more than one type of arrangement. It also shows the characteristics of their families, contrasting the arrangements for preschool- and grade school-age children. For the first time in a Census Bureau child-care report, data are presented on arrangements used while parents are not at work or in school.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

www.ed.gov

- [21st Century Community Learning Centers: Providing Quality Afterschool Learning Opportunities for America's Families](#) (September 2000)
www.ed.gov/pubs/Providing_Quality_Afterschool_Learning/index.html
A report about 21st Century Community Learning Centers after-school grant program. The grantees' experiences confirm that investing in after-school activities makes a significant difference in the lives of America's children, families and communities.
 - [After-School Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart](#) (June 2000)
www.ed.gov/pubs/afterschool/index.html
After-school programs provide a wide array of benefits to children, their families, schools, and the whole community. This report, jointly authored by the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice, focuses exclusively on the benefits children receive in terms of increased safety, reduced risk-taking, and improved learning.
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Federal Responses and Resources

Afterschool.gov

www.afterschool.gov

Connects people to federal resources for information on strategies to support children and youth during out-of-school hours. The site includes a searchable database of federal government funding sources; ideas on networking with others in the field; links to organizations and publications that focus on youth issues; and web sites designed for kids and teens. The cross-agency Federal Support to Communities Initiative developed afterschool.gov as a one-stop web site connecting all Americans to federal resources that support children and youth during out-of-school time.

CORPORATION FOR NATIONAL & COMMUNITY SERVICE

www.cns.gov

The [Learn and Serve America grant program](#) supports teachers and community members who involve young people in service that relates to studies in school. Americorps and Senior Corps programs are also resources for after-school programs.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

www.usda.gov

The U.S. Department of Agriculture sponsors After-School Adventures, Youth Mentoring, and Early Teen Program, a program that focuses on preventing youth violence by providing after-school sports and recreation activities, as well as mentoring.

- **Food and Nutrition Service**

www.fns.usda.gov/cnd

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service funds a number of Nutrition Programs that provide after-school snacks such as the National School Lunch Program, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Service Program. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) provides additional information about food and nutrition resources.

- **National 4-H Council**

www.4-h.org

4-H is the youth education branch of the Cooperative Extension Service, a program of the Department of Agriculture. Each state and each county has access to a County Extension office for both youth and adult programs. The National 4-H Council "[Are You Into It?](#)"TM campaign (www.areyouintoit.com) helps kids get involved in volunteer activities outside of school. The campaign offers resources for youth to act on their concerns about the community and the world. Call 1-888-77-YOUTH for more information.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

www.ed.gov

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers**

www.ed.gov/21stcclc

Provides expanded learning opportunities for participating children in a safe, drug-free and supervised environment. The program enables schools to stay open longer, providing a safe place for homework centers, intensive mentoring in basic skills, drug and violence prevention counseling, helping middle school students to prepare to take college prep courses in high school, and enrichment in the core academic subjects.

The initiative is one of the three largest providers of after-school programs in the nation. The definition of a Community Learning Center is an entity within a public elementary, middle or secondary school building that (1) provides educational, recreational, health, and social service programs for residents of all ages within a local community, and (2) is operated by a local educational agency in partnership with community groups and institutions.

Currently, there are more than 900 21st Century Community Learning Center grantees located in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and Micronesia. These grants support after-school programs in more than 3,600 schools. The programs serve roughly 650,000 children and 250,000 adults. Over the past five years, the program has grown from \$1 million to \$40 million to \$200 million to \$454 million to \$846 million for 2001. The [U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services](#), [Justice](#) and [Labor](#) are working closely with this initiative.

- **[Gear Up](#)**

www.ed.gov/programs/gearup/index.html

Provides grants to support partnerships between colleges and high-poverty middle schools to increase college attendance.

- **[Partnership for Family Involvement in Education](#)**

www.ed.gov/pubs/whoweare/index.html

The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education is an informal organization that encompasses thousands of parents, schools, communities, employers, and religious organizations, all of which work towards the goal of supporting family-school-community partnerships to help children achieve standards of excellence.

- **[Reading Excellence Act](#)**

www.ed.gov/inits/FY99/1-read.html

Allows states to apply for grants to support after-school tutoring and family literacy services through sub grants to local school districts.

- **[Safe and Drug-Free Schools](#)**

www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/SDFS/

The Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act provides formula grant funds which may be used to support both before- and after-school recreational, instructional, cultural, and artistic programs that encourage drug- and violence-free lifestyles, and to provide safety and security for after-school programs. Other Safe and Drug-Free Schools initiatives focus on improving academic achievement, particularly among at-risk youth, via after-school programs that have as their centerpiece volunteer mentors recruited from community organizations, including institutions of higher education and local businesses.

- **[Safe Schools/Healthy Students](#)**

www.mentalhealth.org/safeschools/default.asp

The purpose of the "Safe Schools/Healthy Students" coordinated grant initiative is to help school districts and communities develop and implement comprehensive community-wide strategies for creating safe and drug-free schools and for promoting healthy childhood development so that students can grow and thrive without resorting to violence or other destructive behaviors.

[U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES](#)

www.dhhs.gov

Offers multiple means of assistance for out-of-school time care for children. Agencies like the [Administration for Children and Families](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov) (www.acf.dhhs.gov) provide federal programs that promote the economic and social well-being of families, children, individuals, and communities.

- [Child Care and Development Block Grants](#)

www.hhs.gov/news/press/1998pres/981112e.html

States were required to establish health and safety standards for the prevention and control of infectious diseases, including immunizations; building and physical premises safety; and minimum health and safety training for providers accepting CCDBG funds. Under the new welfare law, all child care providers serving children funded by CCDF must meet the health and safety requirements set by States and Tribes.

[U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE](#)

www.usdoj.gov

- [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#)

<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org>

Supplies resources, funding opportunities, and publications to assist people working with adolescents and youth. The [Out-of-School Activities](#) page (www.parentingresources.ncjrs.org/outofschool/outofschool.html) links users to information about a wide range of activities, including sports, camps, arts programs, and employment.

[U.S. DEPARTMENT OF LABOR](#)

www.dol.gov

- [Employment and Training Administration](#)

www.doleta.gov

Provides opportunities for schools that wish to incorporate [youth training programs](#) (www.doleta.gov/youth_services) into their after-school programs.

References

¹ [21st Century Community Learning Centers: Providing Quality Afterschool Learning Opportunities for America's Families](#). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, September 2000.

² "[Violence After School](#)." Juvenile Justice Bulletin: 1999 National Report Series. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, November 1999.

³ "[Violence After School](#)." Juvenile Justice Bulletin: 1999 National Report Series. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, November 1999.

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