After the school day ends and while many parents are still at work, 1 in 5 kids across America are alone and unsupervised. These hours—from 2 to 6 p.m.—are the peak time for juvenile crime according to the latest report by Fight Crime: Invest in Kids, a national organization of law enforcement leaders.¹ Research has also found that young people not involved in structured activities after school are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, experiment with drugs, and skip school.²

**Afterschool is changing that.**

“At its core, our overall afterschool system is built to promote resilience and thriving, provide protective factors, and elevate assets that can buffer and overcome the effects of trauma and adversity.”³

—American Institutes for Research

**Afterschool programs provide integral developmental supports:**

- Caring and supportive mentors
- Safe spaces where students build confidence and feel a sense of belonging
- Opportunities to work collaboratively and reach consensus
- Activities that promote problem-solving and critical thinking

**In turn, these supports help kids:**⁴

- Gain self-control and confidence
- Improve work habits and grades
- Develop strong social skills
- Improve school day attendance and behavior
- Build healthy relationships with their peers and adults
- Reduce risky behaviors, such as tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol use
Afterschool is Essential to Healthy Youth Development

In addition to helping youth build a range of skills and relationships, afterschool acts as a key setting for healthy development and learning. Science shows that, from birth through young adulthood, our brains are continuously developing: brain pathways grow stronger, information is processed more rapidly, and we build more complex connections that enable more complex thinking.5

Children and youth need continued support throughout this development and across the different learning environments they inhabit, whether home, school, afterschool, or the broader community. Afterschool programs are a part of this continuous system of support, in particular providing key services during one’s adolescent years, which are characterized as, “the second most critical period of development.”6

Recent research found that children who participated in both quality early childcare and afterschool programs saw a positive cumulative effect on their academic achievement in math and reading at age 15. The study also found that greater participation in afterschool programs was related to higher levels of confidence among young people.7

This is Afterschool Helping students thrive.

In response to Vermont’s opioid epidemic among young people in the state, the Vermont Youth Project was created. The project centers on locally driven positive youth development and brings together six communities in Vermont who are building a coalition of community stakeholders that include youth agencies, public health officials, afterschool and summer programs, schools, policy makers, parents, and youth.

According to a 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, young people in Vermont who participated in afterschool activities were found to be less likely to engage in drug or alcohol use than nonparticipants. That’s why the project is aimed at increasing afterschool opportunities for Vermont’s young people, helping them make healthy decisions for themselves, and strengthening the social connections between young people, caring adults, and the community.

Afterschool Helps Vermont Youth Avoid Non-prescription Pain Medication and Alcohol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours/week</th>
<th>Percentage of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 4</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 - 9</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 - 19</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentage of high school students who used drugs or binge drank by hours of participation in afterschool activities

Sources