

AFTERSCHOOL ALERT

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Older Youth Need Afterschool Programs

Afterschool programs provide myriad benefits to all who participate, but the lion's share of programs are geared toward younger children. According to a recent survey, 6.5 million children in the U.S. are in afterschool programs, and just 8 percent are in grades 9-12. However, there are 2.3 million high schoolers who would participate if programs were available.¹ In spite of the autonomy that typically comes with age, teens still need guidance and adult supervision to help keep them safe, in school and on the path to success in life.

Teens need guidance to stay on the path to productive adulthood.

There are 14.3 million children in the U.S. who take care of themselves after the school day ends; 51 percent of them are in grades 9-12.² The conventional wisdom is that by the time youth reach high school, they are old enough to take care of themselves and don't need adult supervision. However, if left to their own devices, teens might not make the best use of the free time they have after school.

- The rate of juvenile crime triples between 3 and 6pm, and youth are more likely to become victims of crime.
 - Compared to non-participants, participants in the Bayview Safe Haven afterschool program in San Francisco with a prior history of arrest were half as likely to be arrested during the six-month initial "intervention" period, and those with no history of arrest were one-third less likely to be arrested.³
- Self-care and boredom can increase the likelihood that a young person will experiment with drugs and alcohol as much as 50 percent,⁴ and ages 12-15 are the years in which youth develop their patterns of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use or nonuse.⁵
- A study of high-risk teens from an urban school district found that the likelihood of having sex for the first time increased with the number of unsupervised hours that teens have in a week. However, adult supervision is closely linked to reduced risky sexual behavior among teens. Research also shows that teens are "more likely to postpone sexual involvement and avoid pregnancy when they can envision a positive future."
 - The Quantum Opportunities Program involved students aged 13-17 who lived in families receiving public assistance. The program offered academic enrichment, community service and a developmental component that included research projects and computer skills development. By the end of the four-year program, 24 percent of the program participants reported becoming a parent, compared with 38 percent of the control group. Also, 63 percent of participants graduated high school, compared to 42 percent of the control group.⁶

Teens need additional help preparing for college and the workforce.

Today, 80 percent of jobs are classified as "skilled," and employment growth is expected to be fastest for positions that require some type of formal postsecondary education.⁷ However, only 32 percent of high school graduates are prepared for college coursework (meaning they require no remedial classes).⁸ Afterschool programs can provide the extra time for career exploration, skills development, and internships that will prepare high school students for college and beyond.

- In 2001, The After-School Corporation launched TASC Fellows, a year-round development program that offers income-eligible students afterschool programs, school year internships, summer jobs and summer enrichment programs. Some places the students have worked include the United Nations and the Queens District Attorney’s Office. The program also offers a work-readiness curriculum that includes mock interviews, resume writing and public speaking. Plus, fellows that have gone on to college or the work force come back to talk with younger students and act as role models for them.

The students that aren’t [in the program] are jealous because they see the great progress made by the Fellows.

Eric Azcuy, the Fellow Advisor of Queens Gateway High School.⁹

- After School Matters (ASM) in Chicago is a partnership between the city, the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District and the Chicago Public Library that offers apprenticeships and other enrichment activities to more than 20,000 teens. The city’s teens told the program operators that they wanted to learn “authentic skills,” and these skills they learn frequently benefit the city. For example, the city was experiencing a lifeguard shortage, so the ASM worked with the parks department to start a training program for these jobs that pay \$10-\$12 an hour.¹⁰

Reaching out to teens can be a challenge.

The typical afterschool program designed for younger students—homework time followed by a snack and some art or sports activities—isn’t going to appeal to older teens who see themselves as young adults. Afterschool programs specially geared toward high school students have to work that much harder to keep attendance up among students who can vote with their feet. For example, many older teens have adult responsibilities, including part-time jobs and caring for younger siblings, so afterschool programs might consider offering more flexible enrollment schedules.¹¹ Other strategies can include “street outreach” (peers as ambassadors) and recruiting groups of friends.

Perhaps the most important aspect of creating an afterschool program for older teens is listening to them. The After School Matters program evolved from a small arts program with six sites in 2000 to a citywide program with 35 sites, and a large part of that expansion involved simply listening to the young people they aimed to serve.

[W]e’ve done a lot of talking with kids to find out what interests them and what would generate their responsiveness.

B.J. Walker, chief of Human Infrastructure, City of Chicago¹²

¹ “America After 3 PM: A Household Survey on Afterschool in America,” Afterschool Alliance, 2004.

² Ibid.

³ *California’s Next After-School Challenge: Keeping High School Teens Off the Street and On the Right Track*, Fight Crime Invest in Kids California, 2004, www.fightcrime.org/ca/highschool/index.php.

⁴ National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse VIII: Teens and Parents, 2003; and *Pediatrics*, Volume 84, Issue 3, The American Academy of Pediatrics, 1989.

⁵ Bailey, William J., *Critical Hours and Critical Years: Precision Targeting in Prevention*, Indiana Prevention Resource Center, 1998, www.drugs.indiana.edu/publications/iprc/newsline/indiana_data.html.

⁶ Manlove, J.; Franzetta, K.; McKinney, K.; Romano-Papillo, A.; Terry-Humen, E.; *A good time: After-school programs to reduce teen pregnancy*, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 2003.

⁷ “2002-12 Employment Projections,” Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/ecopro.t04.htm>, 2004.

⁸ Buehlmann, Beth B., VP and Executive Director, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, “Careers for the 21st Century: The Importance of Education and Worker Training for Small Businesses,” Testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives Small Business Committee, June 2, 2004.

⁹ “TASC Fellows (Workforce Investment Act),” www.tascorp.org/programs/special/fellows.

¹⁰ “High School: The Next Frontier for After-School Advocates?” *Forum Focus*, The Forum for Youth Investment, February 2004, www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/focus/focusv2i1feb04.pdf.

¹¹ Lauver, Sherri; Little, Priscilla; Weiss, Heather; “Moving Beyond the Barriers: Attracting and Sustaining Youth Participation in Out-of-School Time Programs,” Issues and Opportunities in Out-of-School Time Evaluation Briefs, Number 6, Harvard Family Research Project, July 2004, www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp/projects/afterschool/resources/issuebrief6.html.

¹² *Forum Focus*, 2004.